

U.S. expects better Saudi cooperation

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States expects Saudi Arabia to cooperate with the investigation into the bombing that killed 19 American troops in that country, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on Sunday. She said on NBC Television's "Meet the Press" programme that there was no disagreement with the Clinton administration regarding critical statements about Saudi cooperation from Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Louis Freeh and Attorney General Janet Reno. "The FBI is in charge of this investigation," Ms. Albright said. "The Saudis have been cooperative, Mr. Freeh has asked for additional information. The Saudis have assured us at the highest levels that they will be cooperative, and we expect them to be cooperative. Mr. Freeh is in charge. There is a unified position within the United States government, and it is very important to us that this be resolved."



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Abducted Jordanian released in Beirut

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Jordanian detained in Lebanon since early January has been released and is in good health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Sunday. A ministry statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the Jordanian embassy in Beirut had sent a cable to Amman informing that Darrar Karmi, 39, was released Saturday evening. The statement added that Mr. Karmi was resting at home and was in good health. Mr. Karmi, financial controller of the Beirut Marriott Hotel, was taken away by Syrian intelligence agents on Jan. 3 and was not heard of since then. The Jordanian government had filed two formal representations to the Beirut government seeking information on his whereabouts, and officials said early Saturday they were still awaiting a response from the Lebanese authorities. Agency France Presse quoted Mr. Karmi's father in Amman as saying that he was very happy that his son was released. It also quoted Mr. Karmi's wife as saying: "He's resting, he is sleeping."

House votes to maintain one-person, one-vote system after heated debate

1993 temporary election law endorsed with 51 votes for, 21 against and 4 abstentions

AMMAN — The long-running debate over whether Jordan should maintain or discard the one-person, one-vote formula according to which the last parliamentary elections were held came to a head Sunday when the Lower House of Parliament voted overwhelmingly to retain it. The House voted on the draft law after about 30 deputies expressed their views on it, with opposition lawmakers launching one of their fiercest campaigns over the legislation. At the end of the House's most heated meeting in its current and last session, 51 deputies voted in favour of the amended Election Law for 1993 which the government issued as a temporary legislation before the election of the 12th Parliament. 21 deputies opposed it, four abstained and four were absent. The controversial law replaced the bloc-voting formula with the one person, one-vote system and was immediately rejected by the opposition as an unconstitutional mechanism that was aimed at weakening its presence in Parliament. But yesterday's endorsement of the draft law against the recommendation of the House's Judiciary Committee seems to have given the government the blessing for maintaining the one-person, one-vote

formula in the new election law which Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti pledged the government will eventually draft. The House voted on the draft law after about 30 deputies expressed their views on it, with opposition lawmakers launching one of their fiercest campaigns over the legislation. At the end of the House's most heated meeting in its current and last session, 51 deputies voted in favour of the amended Election Law for 1993 which the government issued as a temporary legislation before the election of the 12th Parliament. 21 deputies opposed it, four abstained and four were absent. The controversial law replaced the bloc-voting formula with the one person, one-vote system and was immediately rejected by the opposition as an unconstitutional mechanism that was aimed at weakening its presence in Parliament. But yesterday's endorsement of the draft law against the recommendation of the House's Judiciary Committee seems to have given the government the blessing for maintaining the one-person, one-vote

Other IAF members had similarly harsh criticism of the law but could not win the support of their colleagues for their views. But in a statement to the House, Mr. Kabariti rejected the Islamist claim that all Jordanians oppose the one-person, one vote formula, saying no group, including the government, can claim representing the national consensus on the electoral system. "Opinion polls have shown that our political parties and unions have certain views on the one-person, one-vote formula and that is a position whose reasons are known. But to say that the whole people condemn the law is" unacceptable and does not reflect reality, said Mr. Kabariti. In his strong response to the opposition accusations, the prime minister said that those who reject the draft election law should not have contested elections under it. Mr. Kabariti promised that the government will draft a new "modern" election law but reiterated that the one-person, one vote formula will not be changed. He said the new law will

have to be studied carefully because it will have to address major issues like constituencies, the proposed quota for women, the number of deputies and the mechanism for holding the elections. "To those who accuse the government of oppressing people through the practice of democracy we say that their speeches do not convince us, and to those who accuse others of having corrupt thinking harm the freedom of expression and belief as well as democracy and pluralism," Mr. Kabariti told the House. Mr. Kabariti said the role of the House was to take decisions by the vote of the majority and not to accuse others of blasphemy. Despite the strong stand of the opposition deputies, the House's vote on the draft law came as expected, reflecting the fact that the government enjoys a majority support in the legislature. The draft election law will now be referred to the Senate for debate. If the Senate endorses the draft legislation as expected, it will be signed into law by His Majesty King Hussein.

King leaves hospital after minor surgery

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein left Al Hussein Medical Centre Sunday afternoon after undergoing a minor surgery on his left knee. The King's personal physician, Dr. Samir Farraj, said a cartilage "which caused intense pain" was removed from the King's knee on Saturday. Dr. Farraj said the King, 61, enjoyed excellent health and will resume his activities very shortly. Dr. Farraj said the surgery was performed by arthroscopy, involving use of a fiber optic device for diagnosis and minor surgery. "We looked at the joint and pulled out the cartilage that was causing severe pain in the left knee," he told the Asso-



Jordan Television reported that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat telephoned the King to congratulate him over the successful surgery.

Kabariti says King's Saudi visit was highly successful

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Sunday described His Majesty King Hussein's recent visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the King's talks with King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia as successful and constructive. In a statement to the Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper, Mr. Kabariti said the King's visit to Saudi Arabia provided a good opportunity for both leaders to discuss bilateral cooperation in the various fields, adding that it came within the context of the brotherly relations between both countries. The prime minister, who accompanied the King on the visit, praised King Fahd's efforts to support Arab and Islamic causes, and voiced Jordan's appreciation to King Fahd's supportive role. Mr. Kabariti said the forthcoming visit to Jordan by Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal, due to take place after the 'Eid Al Fitr, will contribute to further enhancing the strong relations between the two countries and to building them on solid and firmer bases, capable of promoting collective Arab action.

Israeli police launch probe that could topple Netanyahu government

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli police launched a criminal investigation Sunday into allegations of government corruption and conspiracy which several ministers said could topple Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. State Prosecutor Edna Arbel said police would investigate the allegations centring on charges Mr. Netanyahu nominated a close associate as attorney-general earlier this month as part of a deal to save a key political ally from conviction on bribery charges. Ms. Arbel also said she would demand that Israel Television, which broke the story last week, hand over its material to police. If the station refuses, Ms. Arbel said she would consider filing a lawsuit against the station and its reporter, Ayala Hasson, to force them to turn over the material and possibly reveal Ms. Hasson's sources. "The circumstances detailed in the report and the alleged suspicions it raises, indicate there is a supreme national interest in the exposure of most of the material upon which the report was based," Ms. Arbel said in a statement. "The revelation is also important for removing and dispelling any suspicions against those not involved."

Israel approves plan to strengthen hold on Arab East Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A committee led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved on Sunday a multi-million dollar development plan designed to strengthen Israel's jurisdiction in Arab East Jerusalem, officials said. Israel Radio also reported that the \$43 million project, recommended by Jerusalem's Israeli mayor, Ehud Olmert, includes establishing a Jewish neighbourhood in the Har Homa area, partially located in the eastern section of the city. An Israeli spokeswoman said the plan includes "the development of roads, building schools and new classrooms, along with water and sewer systems" in the Arab sector over the next four years. She would not comment on whether Sunday's decision included a green light for the Har Homa project, which has been on the municipal government's drawing board for several years. The plan to build thousands of housing units in Har Homa has already raised angry opposition from Palestinians. Work on the new housing is not expected to begin until late this year and still requires a final stamp of approval from the city's planning committees. The plan approved on Sunday also calls for the transfer of government offices from the Jewish, western section of the city to East Jerusalem. Jerusalem's 165,000 Palestinians accuse the Israeli municipality of discrimination in its allocation of funds. The new projects for East Jerusalem are part of a greater \$130 million plan by Mr. Olmert to strengthen infrastructure throughout all of the city. The government committee on Jerusalem affairs includes the defence, foreign and several other ministers.

Rabinstein nominated

A RENOWNED Israeli judge who played a key role in Arab-Israeli peace talks has been nominated as the country's new attorney general. Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi put forward Eliakim Rubinstein for the job. The nomination, disclosed by the justice ministry on Sunday, will have to be ratified next week by the government, but the choice of Mr. Rubinstein has already been welcomed by the opposition Labour and left-wing Meretz parties. against Shas leader Aryeh Deri, who is standing trial on embezzlement and fraud charges, the station said. Mr. Deri told Mr. Netanyahu that if Mr. Bar-On was not appointed, Shas would leave the government coalition, the report said. In a second report on Friday, however, Israel Television reported that Mr. Bar-On had information indicating Mr. Netanyahu did not know about the deal between Mr. Deri and Mr. Bar-On. In the end, Shas supported the Hebron deal — after Mr. Bar-On had already resigned from office. Mr. Netanyahu accused the press on Friday of circulating an unfounded "smear campaign" and called for an investigation. Mr. Deri also denied the allegations. The Yediot Ahronot newspaper cited a senior source in Mr. Netanyahu's office as saying the prime minister and his top aide Ezer Lieberman were willing to take polygraph tests. "We took into account that I will have to say in court I told the truth and that we could win a libel case," he told Israel Radio. "Beyond this, police investigations and investigative committees, the toppling and establishing of governments are not our responsibility. This is just lunacy."

Arafat arrives today

AMMAN (Petra) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will arrive in Amman today on an official visit during which he will hold talks with His Majesty King Hussein on bilateral economic and trade relations as well as the latest developments in the peace process. "We have sent protest letters to the Israeli mayor of Jerusalem and to Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai over these new excavations," he said. Sheikh Najeh Khairat, head of the Heritage Committee at Al Aqsa, told Wafa he had found "many tunnels" during a recent tour of excavations that have been going on outside the southeastern edge of the mosque compound for several years, but said they had been temporarily walled up by the Israelis. "These excavations are no different from the tunnel which led to the September confrontations," he said, referring to the opening in September of a second entrance to a controversial archaeological tunnel along the north-western wall of the raised Al Aqsa compound. Palestinian protests over the opening of the entrance degenerated into gunbattles between Israeli troops and Palestinian police which left more than 80 dead. Sheikh Khairat said that the new tunnels were another attempt "to reach what many Jews claim to be their temple." Sheikh Hussein said Al Aqsa authorities would hold a press conference in coming days to provide details of the reported Israeli excavations. Officials at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque accused Israeli authorities Sunday of digging new tunnels near

Sudan claims military success after disputed assault against rebels

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese army has clashed with rebels who have taken over part of the east of the country and was still planning a "general offensive" to kick them out of Sudan, officials said here. Sudan also said 300 Ethiopian soldiers were killed in the clashes. Rebels denied to AFP that any such clash had taken place. Ali Magid, an official in the Roseires region of the Blue Nile state, on the Ethiopian border, told television Sunday that "the raids against the Tigreans have managed to reduce their presence on the border." The Tigreans are the ruling ethnic group in Ethiopia. The state-run SUNA news agency said an "engagement" took place today (Sunday) at Elias locality while the Sudanese army troops were advancing towards Qeissan. More than 300 Ethiopian troops were killed. "The fact that all the killed were Tigreans stands as evidence that Ethiopian troops are intervening" in eastern Sudan, SUNA said quoting the governor of the Blue Nile state where Qeissan is situated. "Those casualties were monitored and identified by Sudanese reconnaissance forces," the governor, Brigadier Babiker Jaber Kabeilo, told SUNA. Brigadier Kabeilo stressed that Sudan was going ahead with preparations to launch a counter-offensive to recapture Qeissan and nearby Kurnuk, which opposition Sudanese forces have said they have captured on Jan. 12. Ethiopia and Eritrea have denied Sudan's accusations of intervention in the fighting. Khartoum accuses Ethiopia and Eritrea of backing the rebel forces that have seized a swathe of territory in the east of Blue Nile state. Both Addis Ababa and Asmara deny the claim. Ethiopia has not officially reacted to reports of a clash with Sudanese troops. The rebels, opposed to the military government in Khartoum, have seized 2,000 square kilometres or 15 per cent of Blue Nile state since Jan. 12. Speaking Sunday, Mr. Magid said that Sudanese forces and the Ethiopian army had clashed at Umdama, close to Roseires, on Saturday. A "large number of (Ethiopian) soldiers were killed and the remainder retreated back across the border," he said. The official Sudanese press agency said the clash was defence by the Sudanese army and a pro-Khartoum militia against an Ethiopian attack. However, Omar Nour Al Dayem, a leader of the rebel National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Sunday denied to AFP that any clash had taken place. Mr. Dayem said by telephone: "No clash took place Saturday with the government army in this region, neither with the Ethiopian forces nor with the NDA." The Sudanese have for several days been massing troops in eastern Blue Nile state aimed at retaking the towns of Kurnuk and Qeissan, seized on Jan. 12 by the rebels, who comprise the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and northern-based opponents of Khartoum's Islamic regime. Sudan's president, General Omar Beshir said Friday that a counter offensive would soon be launched and said it would be a "decisive battle."

Ungee jump cancelled after fatality

NEW YORK, N.Y. — A planned jump by a group of people to raise money for a charity was cancelled after one person died during a rehearsal. The group was planning to jump from the top of the Empire State Building. The jump was cancelled after one person died during a rehearsal. The group was planning to jump from the top of the Empire State Building. The jump was cancelled after one person died during a rehearsal.

Tafileh mayor withdraws resignation

Attorney general interrogated in Masri case

The court tribunal headed by Judge Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq and Judges Ismael Hmouz and Mifleh Mubeidin, postponed the case until Feb. 4 to hear the second defence witness.

and increasing the volume of trade between both countries. The volume of external trade between Jordan and Yugoslavia amounted to JD 12.3 million at the end of November 1996. Jordan exports to Yugoslavia amounted to JD 825,000 in 1996 while Yugoslav exports to Jordan totalled JD 11.5 million.

murder she told them that she killed him "to save my reputation as he wanted to ruin my reputation and commit adultery."

According to court documents, previous to the murder Ms. Adnan, told Mr. Hussein to make his intentions known to her father.

"If you want me you can come to my father's house," the document quoted Ms. Adnan as saying.

Later that evening, Mr. Hussein went to Ms. Adnan's house and was monitoring her from the window, the document said.

In the first court trial, the affidavit stated that Ms. Adnan, claimed her father had

The aid given to Mu'ta university has also initiated cooperation with other universities in Jordan, such as chemists from Yarmouk University wishing to make use of the new literature.

"Such co-operation is essential for academic progress in the Kingdom as a whole," Professor Mousa concluded.

increased in 1996 by 10,600 tonnes over 1995. The AMC said the United Arab Emirates (UAE) topped the list of importing countries with 38.5 per cent, followed by Bahrain with 14.4 per cent, Qatar with 11.8 per cent, Kuwait with 11.5 per cent, Saudi Arabia with 7.6 per cent and other Arab countries with 1 per cent.

Jordanian exports to foreign countries accounted for 2 per cent of its total exports, according to the AMC.

[illegible]

October of 1994, as attracting European tourism to the Middle East and complimented Jordan's "archaeological treasures."

General Manager of Blue Bird Tour Agency Ali Rawashdeh represented Jordan at the exhibition.

Mr. Rawashdeh met with international businesspersons from the tourism sector and concluded agreements with them to attract Scandinavian tourism to Jordan.

He also met with busi-

nesspersons who seek to promote health tourism in the Dead Sea.

They said the Dead Sea is considered one of the leading healing sites for those suffering from skin diseases which the Scandinavian climate does not help.

Executive Director of one of Danish tour company Knud Pier said that his company is preparing a package which includes Jordan and Israel.

He added that he agreed to arrange one-week trips from Den-

mark. Sweden and Norway to include all archaeological sites in Jordan. Mr. Pier said that he hoped to start these trips next summer.

He added that of the countries in the region, Jordan best meets the Scandinavian tourism requirements.

However, Mr. Rawashdeh described a lack of direct flights linking Stockholm, Copenhagen and Amman as hindering Scandinavian tourism to Jordan.

Afghan peace talks open in Iran without Taliban

TEHRAN, Iran (Agencies) — Factions on one side of Afghanistan's civil war began peace talks Saturday to end strife in their country, but the Taliban militia, which controls two thirds of the war-torn country, is refusing to take part.

"I regret that not all Afghan groups invited by Iran are participating in this meeting," U.N. representative Norbert Holl said. "Without the participation of all Afghan groups it will be difficult to achieve a negotiated settlement."

Beside Afghan faction representatives and Mr. Holl, officials from Pakistan and Turkey also attended the talks.

The Taliban did not send a representative to the talks to protest what it sees as Iran's interference in Afghan affairs and because of its belief that the talks will not produce a ceasefire, a top militia official said Saturday.

The Taliban boycotted the talks because "Iranian authorities didn't observe proper distance from our affairs" and because the talks will not yield "concrete results," said Mohammad Rabbani, head of the Taliban Council running the war-shattered Afghan capital, Kabul.

"We don't care if they

(Taliban) don't come, but it's a good opportunity for them. They've missed the chance," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said at the end of the first round of negotiations.

He blamed the United States for Taliban's boycott. "It seems that the trip of the U.S. official Robin Raphael to the region was effective," he said. This was a reference to a meeting Wednesday in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, between Taliban representative Mullah Wakil Ahmad and Mr. Raphael, an assistant secretary of state.

Meanwhile, the Iranian press Sunday poured scorn on the Afghan peace conference, saying the Taliban Islamic militia's boycott had turned the event into a pointless farce.

The English-language Iran News, which is close to the Foreign Ministry, said the second Afghan peace conference in three months "has no real practical significance when the main belligerent party is absent."

"Conferences such as the current one in Tehran serve no useful purpose other than to damage our national prestige in international circles," the paper added, saying there was "no discernible positive outcome in sight."

The Tehran Times turned on Pakistan, which it said was the Taliban's main backer, and said Islamabad had also undermined the conference by sending a low-key delegation.

"Given that the Taliban is not free to choose the right path and Pakistan is practically discouraging the group from seeking a peaceful settlement, it is clear that holding talks and conferences ... will get nowhere," said the paper.

It said that "issuing statements" would not bring peace to Afghanistan, adding that the "Taliban should be made to abandon military strategy under military pressure."

The Jomhuri-Isami daily, which is close to Iran's conservative fundamentalist clergy, accused the government of "naivety" by inviting the Taliban.

"It is not right that the United States, which is thousands of kilometres from here, tries to have influence in Afghanistan while we, as a neighbouring country, remain voluntarily neutral and indifferent for fear of being accused of interfering," said the paper.

Shi'ite Muslim Iran is wary of the ultra-orthodox Sunni Muslim Taliban and Tehran continues to recognise the government of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani which the Taliban ousted in September.

The official Iranian News Agency (IRNA) had initially reported that the Taliban arrived in Tehran Thursday, the same day as Mr. Rabbani and Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

The Keyhan International newspaper cited an "unconfirmed" report Sunday that the Taliban's Foreign Minister Mohammad Gaus had later left Tehran after a virulent anti-Taliban speech at Friday prayers by prominent ultra-conservative Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati.

Ayatollah Jannati, in prayers at Tehran University in front of Mr. Hekmatyar and Mr. Rabbani, described the Taliban as "without feelings and merciless — they kill, destroy and do whatever they want."

The paper added: "It is clear more than anything that Taliban is a creation of the U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia."

The Taliban has accused its opponents of using peace talks as a breather for regrouping their forces, and on Sunday Taliban forces pushed on with their offensive in northern Afghanistan and claimed to have captured two districts in the strategic Ghorband Valley.



House Speaker Newt Gingrich answers questions from constituents in Roswell Saturday during one of three town hall meetings. Mr. Gingrich talked publicly for the first time about his unprecedented punishment for ethics violations (Reuters photo)

Gingrich defends honour before Georgia constituents

MARIETTA, Georgia (R) — House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich said Saturday that admitting to ethics violations was the "most honourable thing to do" to resolve the issue and flatly denied deceiving Congress.

In a series of public meetings in his home district, the Georgia Republican sought to defend his position as congressional leader and deflect criticism brought about by his unprecedented \$300,000 penalty for ethics breaches.

Mr. Gingrich, in his first public comments since the House voted a reprimand and the \$300,000 penalty Tuesday, said he had made a mistake by trusting his lawyers to guide him safely through the complex congressional code of conduct.

"I trusted the law firm to have done the job right. They didn't do the job right and I didn't catch them, so I thought the most honourable thing to do when you have done something wrong is to say, 'this was a mistake,'" he said.

"Saying upfront, this was a mistake, is the only hon-

ourable thing you can do if you've made a mistake," he said.

Some 1,000 people attended the first two meetings in Roswell and Marietta, which were marked by raucous exchanges between supporters and critics of the controversial speaker.

Mr. Gingrich bristled at one constituent's suggestion that the penalty could be considered a "fine" for intentionally deceiving Congress. Instead, he said he had agreed only to being censored.

"There was no suggestion of intent to deceive. A mistake had been made. That is the total of what I agreed to," on the report by the House Ethics Committee, he said.

He added that he would never have accepted the six-figure penalty if it had been described as a "fine."

"I would have fought a fine, because if the Ethics Committee, which is a non-judicial system, were in a position to destroy middle-class representatives you've got a precedent of enormous danger," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Gingrich said

he was the victim of a House double standard in judging ethics cases and that Democrats including minority leader Representative Richard Gephardt had run into problems but have been left off lightly.

He also noted that a number of tax-exempt organisations were able to keep their status despite political objectives, singling out the Sierra Club which has stated that his ouster is one of its goals.

Mr. Gingrich said the media was partly responsible for his ethics troubles, and accused Democrats of trying to keep public attention on his problems in order to avoid talking about the "things that really matter," namely the Republican legislative agenda.

He proposed that penalties be proposed against members of Congress who file frivolous ethics charges against their colleagues — with triple damages levied against those found to be "repeatedly and maliciously" calling their colleagues on the carpet.

"David Bonior (Democrat of Michigan) and his

friends have filed some 70 false charges. How much have they cost the taxpayers?" Mr. Gingrich said.

Mr. Gingrich supporters passed out handouts detailing his position on the ethics panel had not found him in violation of U.S. tax laws and co-opting his problems for journalistic scandals that have rocked the White House.

The meetings came as the 53-year-old conservative and his allies struggled to weather a storm of controversy in Washington raised by the ethics committee report and Tuesday's 395-28 vote to reprimand him and impose the penalty.

The committee made no finding as to whether Mr. Gingrich used tax-exempt funds illegally for partisan political purposes, in the form of his college course, but the speaker admitted he should have sought legal advice on the issue.

Mr. Gingrich must now find a way to pay his six-figure penalty that would not arouse a new furor.

Saudi papers urge Algeria to crush militants with 'iron hand'

RIYADH (Agencies) — Saudi newspapers Sunday urged the Algerian government to crush an Islamic militant movement with an "iron hand" after negotiations failed to resolve the crisis.

The Al-Yom daily called on "political forces in Algeria to use a decisive method rather than dialogue which turned out to be a failure in the fight against terrorism."

"The time has come to hit the sedition leaders with an iron hand," it added.

Al Bilad newspaper also called for tougher methods. "Because the extremists reject dialogue with the government, security steps must be bolstered and the grip around the extremists tightened to prevent them from achieving their goal to keep Algeria in anarchy and violence," it said.

Meanwhile, The Algeria government, a day after President Liamine Zerroual said innocent citizens were daily victims of "unequalled terrorism," ordered its independent newspapers not to play into the hands of "terrorist propaganda."

Le Matin newspaper reported earlier that suspected Muslim rebels killed 59 people in more massacres in hamlets near Algiers.

Quoting villagers, it said: "Fifty-nine have been assassinated during this weekend in the centre of the country, mostly in Berrougia and in the villages of Benramdane, Saouala and

Baraki."

The Interior Ministry accused some papers of blowing up the death toll in massacres or of inventing killings and said this "plays into the hands of terrorist propaganda and its masterminds."

"The state will no more tolerate all these deviations which will be opposed by the clarity and rigour of the law," it said in a statement carried by the Algerian News Agency (APS) Saturday.

Algerian authorities have draconian powers over the press but independent papers have walked a tightrope in giving details of killings, unclassified by the authorities who until recently repeatedly said only "residual terrorism" remained.

Algeria's main independent dailies all reported more killings in the conflict which broke out five years ago after the authorities cancelled a general election dominated by the Islamic Salvation Front.

Le Matin said more than 250 people had been killed in the two weeks since the start of the Muslim holy month Ramadan on Jan. 10.

In that period, bombs have blasted Algiers and other cities and residents have independently reported the slaughter of entire families, including infants, in isolated communities.

Mr. Zerroual told the nation in a televised address Friday: "Innocent citizens, of all categories, are victims each day of a blind terror-

ism never equalled in other times or other places."

The Interior Ministry warning reinforced a 1994 confidential circular to editors, saying: "The publication of all information of a security nature not covered by the framework of an official statement or public press briefing... is banned."

In the five-year-old conflict, many Algerian newspapers have been closed for up to six months for reporting killings.

More than 60 people working for the media have also been killed in attacks blamed on Muslim rebels who accuse them of supporting the authorities and giving only the official side of events.

Hocine Ait Ahmad, head of the opposition Socialist Forces Front (FFS) denounced Mr. Zerroual's address, in which the president blamed foreign circles for manipulating "criminals, traitors and mercenaries" — Algerian terms for Muslim fundamentalists.

"The state is unable to ensure security and General Zerroual has nothing else to say after remaining silent for weeks but International terrorism," said Mr. Ait Ahmad, an independence war veteran living in self-exile in Switzerland.

"How do they dare, after five years of a war that has killed more than 100,000 people, to repeat old Stalinist clichés?"

Independent estimates put the number killed at 60,000.

Australia Day celebrated amidst rising racial tension

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australians celebrated the 20th anniversary of British settlement Sunday but festivities were once again staged against a backdrop of rising tension between white and indigenous Australians.

The year has been overshadowed by a renewed "debate" on race and immigration, a furor which was largely created by one woman, a notorious independent Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson, from the blue-collar seat of Oxley.

Her depiction of Aborigines as lazy, ungrateful and overindulged, and her warnings that the country was in danger of being "swamped by Asians" were taken up enthusiastically by a significant number of Australians.

One newspaper which recently held an "Australian of the year" competition was reportedly inundated with votes for Mr. Hanson, forcing it to appeal to the wider community for more nominations.

Australian Governor-General Sir William Deane, the queen's representative to the country, Sunday used his first Australia Day speech to call for reconciliation between black and white Australians by the year 2001.

Sir Deane called the state of Aboriginal health "a tragic story of sickness, suffering, dying and death of fellow Australians."

He said unless the issue was resolved, and genuine reconciliation strived for, Australians would enter the next century "as a diminished people."

"We won't achieve (reconciliation) until we reach the stage of basic justice and decency where the life expectancy of an Aboriginal baby is at least comparable to that of a non-Aboriginal one," he said.

Both sides of politics agree the most important issue to be resolved this year is a complex and prolonged legal battle over indigenous Australians' right to "native title" over land with which they have traditional links.

Media attention has also focused this week on Australia's only urban ghetto, which is set to be partially demolished in an attempt to halt soaring crime rates.

U.S. study says new evidence implicates Khmer Rouge chiefs

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut (R) — The U.S.-funded Cambodian genocide programme has discovered enough new evidence to "clearly implicate" Khmer Rouge leaders in crimes against humanity during their brutal 1975-79 rule, the manager of the programme said Saturday.

The new evidence also suggests the death toll might be closer to two million than the previous, widely believed figure of one million, said Craig Etcheson, associate research scientist in Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Programme.

"This removes any question of whether or not crimes against humanity were committed, and who committed them," Mr.

Etcheson told in an interview.

The mass of information collected over the past two years includes gravesites, signed execution orders and documents on workings of the Khmer Rouge security service.

But Mr. Etcheson stopped short of saying there was enough evidence to convict the Khmer Rouge leaders before a world tribunal. "These are questions for prosecutors and judges instead of the mere bearers of information," he said.

Several top leaders of the "killing fields" regime are known or believed to still be alive and in territory controlled by Khmer Rouge hardliners, including Pol Pot, the leader of the group, his deputy Nuon Chea, no-

minial Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan, defence chief Son Sen, and feared one-legged commander Ta Mok.

Mr. Etcheson said the top leadership of the Communist Party of Cambodia of 1975-79 was "clearly implicated," including former Khmer Rouge Foreign Minister Ieng Sary.

Mr. Ieng Sary joined the Khmer Rouge government last year after receiving a royal amnesty from a 1979 death sentence handed down in absentia for his role in the deaths of more than one million people under the Pol Pot regime.

Mr. Etcheson said the researchers have a general policy of not commenting on individual cases, such as Mr. Ieng Sary's.

British soldier hurt by suspected IRA bomb

BELFAST (R) — An off-duty British soldier was wounded in a suspected Irish Republican Army (IRA) booby-trap bomb attack in the country town of Ballynahinch in Northern Ireland early Sunday.

Security sources said he was slightly injured when his parked car exploded as he and two colleagues were close to it. "As he walked forward to check it, it exploded," a police spokesman said.

The explosion appeared to be the latest in a string of attacks on soldiers and police mounted by the banned IRA. British security sources said.

The off-duty soldiers, believed to be from a nearby army base at Ballykinlar in County Down, had left the vehicle in a car park late Saturday night.

"It was really only by vigilance that lives were saved," a police source told Reuters.

Ballynahinch is some 30 kilometres south of Belfast and a short distance from Downpatrick where mortars were fired at security force patrol last week.

In the north-western town of Dungiven, security forces seized a home-made projectile and rifle and arrested five men.

A police spokesman said that arrested followed "suspicious activity" at Main Street, where the town's fortified police station is located, but he did not give any details.

The missile was a "prig," a propelled recoilless improvised grenade, a common IRA weapon used to attack bases and patrolling security vehicles.

Soldiers and police have been on full alert in recent weeks after a sudden surge in IRA hostilities and revenge attacks by pro-British loyalist extremists.

Britain says that the IRA, which abandoned a 17 month truce in February 1996, is intensifying its campaign to goad its loyalist forces into abandoning a 27 month cease-

fire. The IRA is fighting to end British rule and achieve an all-Ireland state. Loyalists killed minority Catholic nationalists in a campaign to safeguard rule from London.

Korean union threatens new strike

SEOUL (R) — The leader of South Korea's outlawed union group, addressing a large protest rally yet again, vowed to advance the date of fresh strikes unless the bill was scrapped.

"If our demands are not met, we want we will launch a full-on stoppage campaign planned for February 18 earlier than that," Kwon Young-ho told a crowd estimated by organisers at 200,000 in Seoul. Police put the size of the crowd at 55,000 and witnesses said the mood was probably somewhere in between.

It was Mr. Kwon's first public appearance since he emerged from hiding at a cabinet with six union deputies last Friday after threats to arrest them for organising almost four weeks of strikes were lifted.

President Kim Young-sam, bowing to domestic pressure and stung by international criticism, last week agreed to send the controversial law back to parliament for revision, but insisted it would not be voided.

The outlawed Confederation of Korean Trade Unions is maintaining its presence on the government with a day of strikes every Friday on Wednesday.

Some 100 demonstration workers, a group of concrete masons and Seoul's financial district was jointly organised by the confederation and the officially sanctioned Federation of Korean Trade Unions.

Many workers brought their own along to chant slogans, sing protest songs and hold up placards held aloft by the mostly guard-mounted crowds near "unite in solidarity" and "repel the evil labour law."

A crowd of workers carried red poles with billowing red banners, traditional in Korean funerals — been the words "democracy is dead."

The cause is for freedom not only for 12 million workers but for all of South Korea's 40 million people and Mr. Kwon.

He accused the government of squandering money handed to Hanbo Steel Corp, the country's second largest steelmaker that collapsed under a mountain of debt last week instead of supporting embattled small enterprises.

Hanbo's sinking court receivership that would allow it to receive payments on debt of \$1.1 billion won \$6.7 billion.

"What is killing the economy? It's the government and chaebos," Mr. Kwon said and returned to grant business union leaders, including Hanbo Steel's parent, the Hanjin group, that enthusiastically back the new law.

The law makes it easier for firms to lay off workers and replace workers. It also maintains a ban on the unionisation of the next union.

President Kim has indicated he believes the bill should be lifted, but it is not clear how far he is prepared to compromise on other contentious issues.

On Saturday, confederation official Chung Sung-hwa said the "struggle against the law would go on."

"We let the cathedral to avoid further inconvenience to the church. Our struggle will continue until the vicious law is made void and a new law is in place," he said.

Further, the main opposition New Politics softened its stand and said it was prepared to debate the law in parliament if the government apologised for its forced passage on Dec. 20.

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Illogical reasoning

JORDAN'S PROTEST to Lebanon over the sudden release of three Iraqi diplomats who confessed to murdering a Jordanian citizen in 1994 is legally, politically, and morally correct. There is no way that the Lebanese government can convince us that the Jordanian protest constitutes meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs. When the case of the murdered Taleb Souheil is viewed in proper perspective, the Jordanian indignation at the release of three self-confessed Iraqi murderers becomes all the more appreciated. The three Iraqi officials not only freely confessed to committing the crime, following their capture while trying to flee the country in April 1994, the Lebanese government was also so incensed at the refusal of Baghdad to lift their diplomatic privileges to face prosecution that it decided to break diplomatic relations with Iraq.

The sudden decision by the Lebanese authorities that they cannot prosecute the three killers calls for deep concern. Their sudden about-face cannot be explained except in political terms. Otherwise why or how would they need three years to make a legal determination that runs counter to their earlier verdict that the three Iraqis are nothing but murderers who exploited their diplomatic status to commit a crime against a Jordanian national?

The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities was never intended to serve as a licence to kill. The spirit of the convention needs to be looked at and observed by all states. If diplomats are caught committing a felony, they are supposed to be prosecuted. Had Lebanon received assurances from Baghdad that the three "diplomats" would be tried in an Iraqi court on the basis of their confession and that they would be punished accordingly, we could perhaps understand the Lebanese government's literal and strict application of the convention.

There is nothing in the international treaty that suggests that diplomats implicated in a crime would escape trial and punishment. In this case, Baghdad has not offered any guarantees that their envoys will be criminally prosecuted in a court of law. Freeing self-confessed criminals would make a mockery of the convention in question, not to mention the commitment of all nations to fight terrorism.

In any case, since when raising issues on terrorism constitutes interference in domestic affairs as Beirut now contends? Committing acts of terrorism and grave human rights violations is the concern of the entire international community. The era when states can hide behind absolute sovereignty to perpetrate serious violations of international norms on human rights is gone forever. Jordan has a special stake in this case because the murdered man, though Iraqi-born, was a Jordanian citizen. We doubt that the Lebanese government would stay silent if one of its nationals was murdered by a person or a group of persons who enjoyed diplomatic immunity anywhere in the world. Diplomatic immunity is designed to aid diplomats conduct their legitimate duties and functions without interference. This is the true reading of the relevant international law. Any other interpretation would simply negate the intents and purposes of diplomatic privileges.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AN EDITORIAL in Al Ra'i daily urged the Arab states to unite and forget their differences in order to aid the Sudanese who are facing a new foreign conspiracy against their nation. The war in Sudan has entered its second week, with no end in sight, the editorial says, adding that it appears that the conflict could actually spread to the Ugandan borders. All this seems to be happening while Sudanese delegations go from one Arab capital to another, seeking understanding and help for the nation's plight, continued the editorial. Jordan was the first to respond to the cry for protection of Sudan's population and its territorial integrity, upon request from His Majesty King Hussein, says the editorial. Meanwhile, Nicholas Burns, U.S. State Department spokesman, issued a statement saying that his country requested that neighbouring countries respect Sudan's territorial integrity by abstaining from sending mercenaries or aid to the opposition, while a statement issued by the American embassy in Khartoum says that the current situation in Sudan is an internal matter, to be solved by the government and the opposition, and that the U.S. is not obligated to intervene or attempt to halt the current state of belligerence.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i pointed out the contradictory nature of one of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz's recent statements which says that Iraq received goods and services in return for free oil it exported to Jordan. Fahed Fanek asks how the oil can be considered as offered for free as long as it was bartered for goods and services from Jordan at the current international oil rates. The writer also wondered how Mr. Aziz could start his statement by saying that Iraq has no debts to Jordan and end it by stating that Iraq is ready to pay the debts. The oil Jordan receives from Iraq is repayment of Iraqi debts to the Kingdom. The writer points out that Mr. Aziz contradicts his own statement that Iraq gives Jordan free oil when in reality Jordan pays for it with goods and services.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Will the euro replace the dollar?

THERE ARE fears of cumulative global weakening because of the European Monetary Union (EMU) which will bring into physical reality, in January 1999, the euro: the manifestation of the European Currency Unit (ECU). Investors worry about the possible competition between the euro and the dollar while growth economists wonder what the effect of the euro on world growth will be in the coming three years.

Additionally, while many countries around the world have made the dollar the most prominent component of their reserves (the world average share of the dollar in official reserves is 60 per cent), this dominance is being seriously challenged by the Deutschmark (DM), also a major component of the ECU. If the euro becomes as popular as the DM, international private investments in Europe will no doubt flourish. However, official reserve portfolios will not doubt have to change. How this change will affect the world, and especially Jordan, remains to be seen. A strategic awareness of the play of the dollar and the euro will help forecast Jordan's economic and monetary stability in the few years to come.

The ECU is the product of a cooperative exchange rate agreement known as the European Monetary System (EMS) which, in March 1979, introduced the European currency unit (ECU) to be used as the official unit of account for budget transactions and as a reserve asset of the European Union. Presently, there are no physical ECUs, they are simply accounting entries whose ownership is determined by debits and credits to the financial accounts of the concerned business and institutional entities. In many ways, the ECU is analogous to the Special Drawing Right (SDR) which is a composite currency unit issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The ECU was welcome internationally for two reasons. It consists of the currencies of the EU member nations, with the DM making up over 30 per cent of its value. In contrast to the SDR, which has a dollar content of over 40 per cent, the ECU has zero dollar content. Therefore, it has been widely accepted by private businesses as a greater hedge against the dollar than the SDR. Furthermore, the ECU is considered to be a very stable currency because of the commitment of the members of the EMS to stabilise the European exchange rates.

Anneke van Dok, the Dutch minister for foreign trade, stressed that the role of the euro will be that of "a buffer against blows from outside the EU" and that "it (the euro) will help us (EU member states) weather blows that could result from our internal relations." In her view, the use of a single currency will enhance trade considerably as traders are freed from the impediments that different currency transactions bring to cross-border activities.

In the long run, the European Union will require fewer reserves once the euro is launched as the central banks of the European Monetary Union countries convert assets previously held in European currencies to the euro. Consequently, the share of dollar reserves will expand as the two currencies are pitted against each other. Or as they say in the world of finance: "as the two currencies are used to hedge against each other." But is the econom-

ic situation in the EU different from that in the U.S.? The answer is affirmative.

The contrast between U.S. and EU employment and growth figures is a source of alarm to business strategists and financial analysts. Many of the countries in Western Europe are facing high unemployment, while the U.S. is undergoing one of the strongest economic recoveries it has had in decades, with employment hovering around the full employment rate and no signs of it slowing down. Therefore, when one of the trade giants is enjoying a high peak in the business cycle, the other will be in a low trough. Thus, with both economies diametrically opposed, it will be no surprise to investors that the monetary policies of both Gollads will also be at odds with each other. Their currencies will be pitted against each other.

In the immediate future, world output is expected to expand by 4.1 per cent in 1997, which is the best economic performance enjoyed since 1988 when the conservatives and their supply side economics ruled the world through their new old world order of chaos. This expected growth rate surpasses even last year's growth rate of 3.8 per cent. However, the optimism will have to be carried by the U.S. alone, as EU members planning to join the EMU learn prudence and use conservative monetary policies. Many of the EU members are forced to reduce their budget deficits to meet the EMU standards. This is not an easy task, especially in countries that are suffering from high unemployment, such as France where the Chirac government witnesses a record 12.5 per cent unemployment rate. (Unemployment stood at 11.7 per cent at the time of Chirac's election in May 1995).

With budget cuts in the EU countries, consumers are less likely to purchase products, especially with governments intent to close budget gaps. Yet budgets have to be tightened, which makes truly for a bitter medicine. Furthermore, it seems that the arena is empty of Japan, the world's third largest contender and a continuous source of headache to the other two. Tokyo is also expected to restrict spending, which means that the budget of the Japanese government will be tightened and the economic recovery witnessed in Japan last year will slow down considerably; possibly to a downturn. In other words, the arena will only have two players.

Jordan has to reduce the share of dollar in its foreign reserves in the long run. The present dollar share of 80 per cent will have to decrease as the euro becomes a reality and as it evolves as a true hedge against fluctuations of the dollar. In the short run, the increased demand for the dollar in Europe and the decreased demand for the dollar in the rest of the world will keep analysts wondering for a while.

At the end of this labyrinth of international exchange rates, I am reminded by the words of Paul Samuelson, the great master of economic doctrine who said: "If you want to predict, predict a lot." Therefore, I will not forecast an outcome as one is usually tempted to do at the end of an analytical journey. I just hope that I have shed some light on a somewhat hairy issue.

Human Rights File

Domestic help has human rights too

By Waleed M. Sadi

THE GOVERNMENT recently tried to re-regulate the residency requirements of domestic help being recruited from foreign countries, essentially Sri Lanka and the Philippines, by stipulating new ground rules on how they can be brought into the country and how they may stay in the service of Jordanian families.

What the concerned authorities have noticeably failed to do until now was to take effective measures to make sure that once domestic helps are in the country they are treated humanely and fairly.

It is common knowledge, after years of experience with the phenomenon of Sri Lankan and Filipina maids, that most of them work in slave-like conditions that solicit the least attention from the state or concern from the public.

It is a well-known fact that many of these people who are driven by poverty to leave their homes and loved ones to serve us long hours are deprived of a weekly holiday, that all human beings have, with a majority of them literally locked in the premises where they work for weeks on end, without ever seeing the outside world.

The shocking allegations, that we all have heard and read about two years ago, that the honorary consul of Sri Lanka had a role in maid recruitment suggests that many of these women are sexually exploited and mistreated in every sense of the word. There is no other way of describing the fate and conditions of these people other than they are being treated as objects, deprived of every human right under the sun.

Why, then, did our responsible people in government see fit to further regulate the residency issues related to domestic help but did not see appropriate to prescribe binding rules on how these people should be treated? This overlook is, I believe, a big puzzle and a cause for great concern.

We need a legally binding code for the employment and treatment of domestic help in our midst as a matter of highest priority. The proposed legislation's scope would also deal with common complaints against some maids who are sometimes accused of abusing the trust placed in them by either engaging in sexual activities or stealing from the houses in which they work. Admittedly, the behaviour of a number of maids ends up tarnishing the good image of all the others. But this reality should not stop us from protecting the innocent majority from the "slave-like" treatment they are being accorded.

For this purpose, we need a special bureau for receiving and dealing with complaints from either side. Redress of problems arising from the employment of domestic help must be effective and swift, in accordance with the legal adage that "justice

delayed is justice denied." This also entails according the proposed bureau jurisdictional powers to investigate complaints on the premises as soon as they are received.

Prosecuting employers for violating the basic human rights of maids must also be judicially swift. In order to facilitate the administration of justice in this domain, the legislation on the working conditions of maids must be detailed enough and in line with international standards, as prescribed by the International Labour Office (ILO).

Jordan is treaty obligated to respect and implement all the relevant ILO conventions on the employment of domestic help and any shortcomings on our part in that direction could be the subject of an international censorship.

"Jordan is treaty obligated to respect and implement all the relevant ILO conventions on the employment of domestic help and any shortcomings on our part in that direction could be the subject of an international censorship."

At the same time, it is high time that local human rights groups take up the human rights situation of domestic help. No human rights organisation is worth its name if it shies away from this burning issue.

It is amazing that no local chapter of human rights associations has seen fit to start a campaign for the protection of the human rights of the girls and women who work in our houses. It is bad enough that the government has been woefully derelict in its duties in this regard. We, the people who are being served by foreign maids, should rectify this ongoing shortcoming by starting forthwith a crusade to protect them from abuse and visibly unfair treatment. Otherwise, this double state-private neglect will continue to send the wrong message that all maids in this country are not treated as human beings whose rights should be addressed.

It would be refreshing if we, the people, took the lead in this domain so that the government may follow in our footsteps. This would be the people's finest hour in the defence of human rights which we speak so much about.

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

A SECOND season of excavations in 1996 by a team of archaeologists headed by Dr. S. Thomas Parker of North Carolina State University (U.S.) has finally resolved the mystery of the location of the Nabataean/Roman/Byzantine town at Aqaba.

Excavations elsewhere in Aqaba in recent years have uncovered the early Islamic town and a major settlement from the Iron Age — but the nearly 1,000 years in between have always been a blank spot in the city's archaeological record. Dr. Parker's work has now identified and partially exposed significant urban remains of the town that existed at Aqaba during the late Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods. Among the most significant finds from his 1994 and 1996 seasons are large sections of the fortified Roman-Byzantine city walls, a probable Byzantine bathhouse and cemetery and a Nabataean ceramics industry.

Aila was the name of the city in the Nabataean/Roman-Byzantine era (the Islamic era city has been called Aila, spelled with a 'y' to distinguish between the two adjacent sites).

The mystery of Roman Aila location was heightened by known historical references to the city that frequently played a strategic role in the geo-politics and commerce of this region. An Iron Age port-town known as Ezrongaba in the Bible existed in this region; it may be the ancient town, excavated earlier this century at Tell Al Khelateh, north-west of modern Aqaba in the former no man's land between Jordan and Israel. Tell Al Khelateh was abandoned in the 4th century BC, and there is no evidence of a Hellenistic occupation of the region between the 4th and 1st centuries BC, though Rhodian stamped coin hoards from around 200 BC found at Tell Al Khelateh hint at a Hellenistic presence in the area.

Diodorus, writing in the 1st century BC, mentions Aila as a Nabataean city, and in the early 1st century AD the Roman writer Strabo mentions Aila as a "polis" or city. Strabo mentions that merchants from Aila required 70 days

LETTERS

Jordan-German cooperation not nearing end

To the Editor:

I READ with interest Dr. H. Jorgan's article "Europe-Near East cooperation: The policy of the EU member states is to respond as partners to the expectations of the Arab World" (Jordan Times, Jan. 26, 1997), that touches briefly on German cooperation with Jordan.

Dr. Jorgan's appraisal of the German cooperation with Jordan and of its impact on the Jordanians is indeed very modest. I have had the opportunity to interact with the cooperation programme with Germany for a decade and a half prior to my leaving government service in 1987. I can say that the positive impact of German assistance to Jordan has been profound, and the cooperation programme itself has been consistent and sustained. The Jordanians will always hold in high regard the consideration and concern the Germans have demonstrated towards the Kingdom in good and lean times. It is with this feeling of a Jordanian that I allow myself to comment on Dr. Jorgan's illuminating but modest article.

Dr. Jorgan says: "Comparing the countries of the Near East with each other, one's attention is caught by the extreme imbalances which exist regarding natural resources, fresh water resources and the capacity to generate revenue." While this observation is half right, attention should be directed towards the population-resources equation for the countries of the region, the key factor behind the disparities he referred to. Jordan, in this regard, stands at "the bottom of the totem pole," especially when it comes to renewable fresh water resources per capita. At a meagre 170 cubic metres per capita per year today (14 per cent of its need), Jordan is well below the absolute poverty line.

Actually, the total water resources of Jordan have been fluctuating around a stationary average for over 20 centuries throughout which Jordanians sustained a good livelihood with an agricultural economic base. It is today's unprecedented population level and the requirements of good living standards that made the difference.

2. Dr. Jorgan observes that the Near East region has a high rate of refugees, some 30 per cent of all world refugees. Averages actually distort the pattern of refugees distribution. One does not need to be reminded that the region's refugees are primarily the Palestinians that were evicted from their homeland in 1948, not to mention those that were displaced to Jordan in 1967 and in 1990. Again, on this score, Jordan takes pride that, among the countries of the region, UNRWA records show that it has been host to the highest percentage of Palestinian refugees.

3. Regrettably, Dr. Jorgan states, as far as Jordan is concerned, that "the sewage system, as well as sewage treatment, enjoys special attention because only treated 'waste' water will be available for agricultural irrigation in the future." Such an outright conclusion is backed only by casual supply-demand forecasts for municipal and industrial water, without any regard to the agricultural demands. I have heard urban Jordanians advocate that absolute priority in water allocation is for municipal water, followed by industrial water needs and at the tertiary end, the

requirements of agriculture. This suggests that man can live by keeping good domestic hygienic standards, drinking a bit, gardening around his house and washing his car. Tertiary consideration is given to his stomach needs. I have yet to meet a woman or a man who can maintain a living standard of any level doing just that. Additionally, one has to remember that replacing current irrigation water with treated waste water will not assure sustainability of existing irrigated areas, nor would the quality of pure effluent be fit for use in unrestricted agriculture.

Not only do some Jordanians advocate that, I have also seen recipes advanced to Jordan by several lending institutions doing the same thing. I have not, however, laid eyes on any sober analysis of the real cost of reducing the areas of irrigated agriculture. I venture to suggest that this real cost will be higher than the marginal cost of supply of desalinated brackish water to urban areas. The cost of dislocation of people that have depended on irrigated agriculture for millennia is not small, neither will their retreating to qualify for urban jobs be easy. In the meantime, the state has to cope with a category of "lost people," maybe another category of "refugees."

4. I was surprised by the size of the technical assistance package contributed by the Federal Republic of Germany to Jordan. Dr. Jorgan put this at one billion Deutsch marks (DM) since 1977, and it is about the same amount as the financial assistance package ever since. I have a pretty good idea about the valuable yields of the financial package and its socio-economic impact. Electrification of the Jordan Valley, domestic water supply to the southern Jordan Valley and the Hisban-Kafrin irrigation scheme are but a few examples whose aggregate cost did not exceed DM 35 million. The returns from the three projects alone outweighs the returns from most of technical assistance package of one billion DM since 1977.

5. Finally, I agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Jorgan on the EU priorities for the future, but I would like to suggest that the technical cooperation in agriculture with Jordan has not reached the absorptive capacity of the Jordanians, as the article suggests. It should be at another starting stage at this age of biotechnological revolution. I further desire to suggest that the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) take the necessary measure to drastically improve the yield per one million DM of technical cooperation funds. It is good for Jordan, and it is better for the German taxpayer whom Jordanians hold in high esteem.

Dr. Munther Haddadin,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

A view looking south, showing the remains of the possi

A mystery no more: American team documents the remains of Roman Aqaba

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

A SECOND season of excavations in 1996 by a team of archaeologists headed by Dr. S. Thomas Parker of North Carolina State University (U.S.) has firmly resolved the mystery of the location of the Nabataean/Roman/Byzantine town at Aqaba.

Excavations elsewhere in Aqaba in recent years had uncovered the early Islamic town and a major settlement from the Iron Age — but the nearly 1,000 years in between have always been a blank spot in the city's archaeological record. Dr. Parker's work has now identified and partially exposed significant urban remains of the town that existed at Aqaba during the late Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods. Among the most significant finds from his 1994 and 1996 seasons are large sections of the fortified Roman-Byzantine city walls, a probable Byzantine basilica and cemetery and a Nabataean ceramics industry.

Aila was the name of the city in the Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine era (the Islamic era city has been called Ayla, spelled with a "y", to distinguish between the two adjacent sites). The mystery of Roman Aila's location was heightened by known historical references to the city that frequently played a strategic role in the geo-politics and commerce of this region. An Iron Age port-town known as Ezion-geber in the Bible existed in this region; it may be the same town excavated earlier this century at Tell Al Khelifeh, north-west of modern Aqaba in the former no-man's land between Jordan and Israel. Tell Al Khelifeh was abandoned in the 4th century BC, and there is no evidence of a Hellenistic occupation of the region between the 4th and 1st centuries BC (though Rhodian stamped jar handles from around 200 BC found at Tell Al Khelifeh hint at a Hellenistic presence in the area).

Diodorus, writing in the 1st century BC, mentions Aila as a Nabataean city, and in the early 1st century AD the Roman writer Strabo mentions Aila as a "polis", or city. Strabo mentions that merchants from Aila required 70 days

to reach the southern Arabian Peninsula to get frankincense, a valuable commodity in ancient times that was much prized throughout the Levant, Arabia and the Mediterranean basin.

Roman Aila would have been an important town because of its strategic location at the south-eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. It was the terminus of a major trunk road built in the early 2nd century AD, the Via Nova Traiana (Trajan's New Road), that linked Damascus and Syria with the Red Sea. At the end of the 3rd century AD, a Roman legion, the legio X Fretensis, was transferred to Aila from Jerusalem; but there must have been a garrison to protect the port city before the arrival of the 10th Fretensis Legion.

In the Byzantine period, bishops from Aqaba are mentioned in the records of several ecclesiastical councils, starting in 325 AD, and architectural evidence of church structures has been collected over the years. Aila was a popular stop for pilgrims en route to or from Mt. Sinai, with "eight staging posts" separating Aila from Mt. Sinai, according to one pilgrim's report dated 570 AD. The same report mentions that ships from India sailed into Aila carrying "a variety of spices", indicating that the port saw considerable commercial activity well into the 6th century AD.

The site of pre-Islamic Aila was first identified in 1990 in a survey conducted by John Meloy, as part of the University of Chicago-led project on Islamic Aila. He identified traces of mud brick walls and scatters of pottery and other artefacts on the surface of an area of some 40 hectares, lying within 100-500 metres of the shoreline. This area of Roman Aila is situated some two kilometres south-east of Tell Al Khelifeh, and just north-west of Islamic Aila.

(One of the intriguing new mysteries at hand is why the historical settlement at Aqaba has steadily moved from the north-west to the south-east in the last six thousand years — from Chalcolithic Tell Maqass, to Iron Age Tell Al Khelifeh, to Roman Aila, to Islamic Aila, and finally to middle/late Islamic Aqaba around the surviving castle north of the modern port.)

During this year's two-month field effort, the project "identified architecture and cultural remains spanning a period of over one thousand years, from the late 1st Century BC to the 10th Century AD," Dr. Parker told the Jordan Times in a recent interview in Amman. He says this confirms that a substantial Nabataean commercial city and port existed at Aqaba by the 1st Centuries BC/AD, with large quantities of imported fine ware pottery, such as terra sigillata.

One area of the ancient town from its earliest Nabataean/Early Roman phase yielded mud brick walls still standing two-metre high in places, from probable domestic structures with associated tabuns (bread ovens). The pottery included Nabataean painted ware, imported terra sigillata from the eastern Mediterranean, and a reconstructable amphora from the western Mediterranean, indicating trade links with these areas. This same area, along with others, was inhabited in the Late Roman period, perhaps as early as the mid-to-late Second Century AD, to judge from the remains of mud brick structures. The discovery of 25 tabuns in one area, along with two circular installations interpreted as flour mills, suggests intensive baking activity, which went on into the early Byzantine period in the 4th Century AD. Late Roman/Early Byzantine vaulted mud brick tombs were uncovered in one area, along with contemporaneous domestic installations, including two tabuns. Eleven tombs have been excavated to date from one early Byzantine period dating from the 4th Century, according to coin and pottery evidence. The east-west aligned tombs were simple rectangular structures made of mud bricks, at the base of a one-metre-deep shaft. Many shards from imported Egyptian amphorae were associated with this cemetery.

Jordan's earliest church?

Perhaps the most exciting discovery this year was a large, vaulted mud brick building that is tentatively being identified as a mid-4th Century church — making it the earliest known church in Jordan, and one of the earliest any-

where in the world. The structure is aligned on an east-west axis and once measured at least 25 by 20 metres; it had arched doorways and vaults and some painted walls. Remains of a staircase suggest that it may have had a second story. Artefacts recovered from the building include many coins, much glass (from lamps?), metal objects and much pottery, including imported African red slip ware.

"All the architectural evidence, combined with its association with the adjacent Byzantine cemetery, suggests that this was designed as a Christian basilica," Dr. Parker said. He said that possible parallels are known from Egypt, where 5th-6th Century basilicas lack an apse at their eastern end, as does this building.

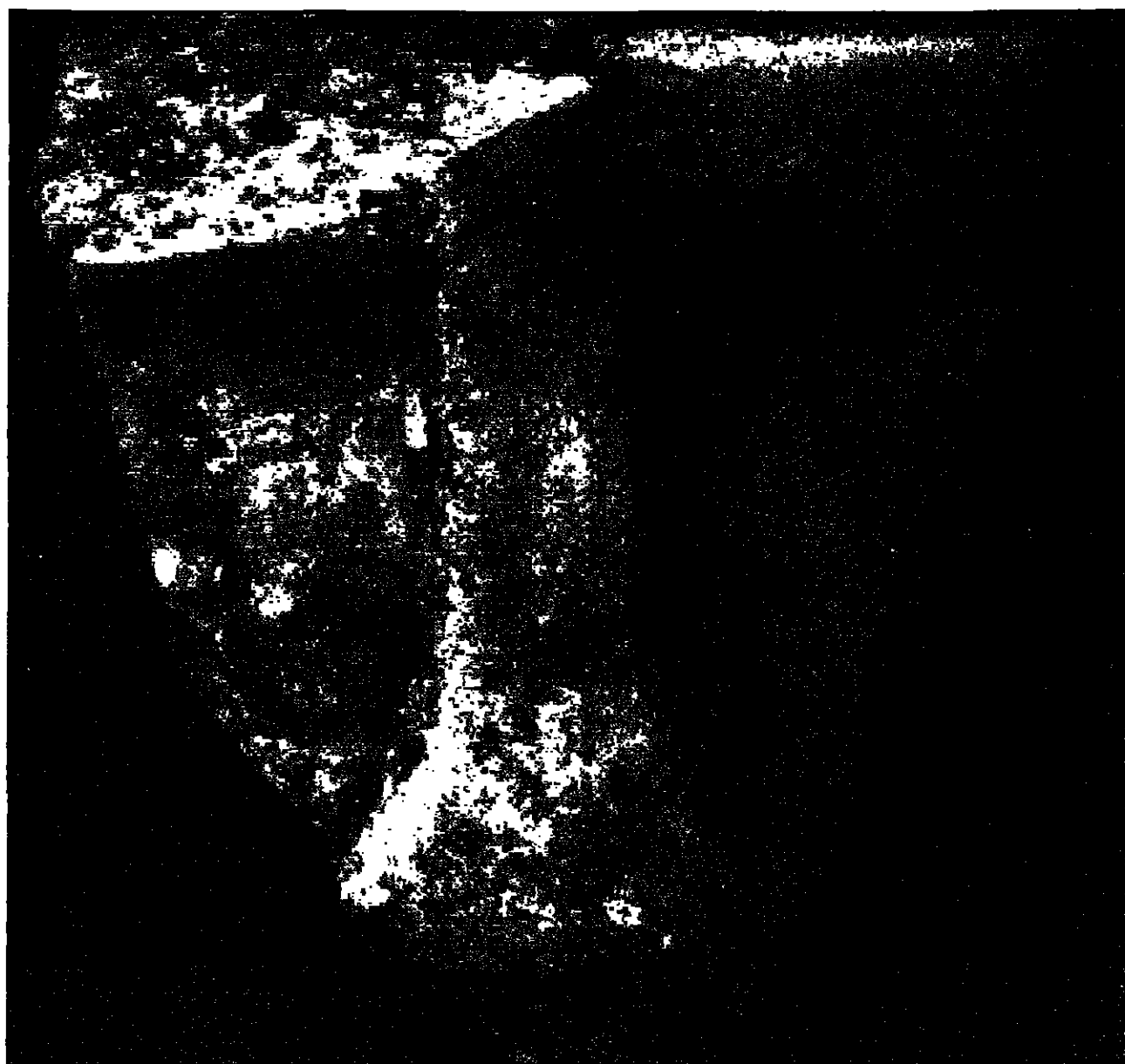
Dr. Parker adds that the plentiful Egyptian pottery "may imply the presence of an Egyptian Christian community at Aila in the 4th Century, which would not be surprising since we already have literary evidence for a Bishop at Aila in the year 325 AD."

The earliest known "church" in the world, from 230 AD, is a house that was converted for Christian worship at Dura Europus, on the Euphrates River. It is possible, though, that this was not a religious building but rather a civil basilica used as a Roman era law court. Further excavations will clarify this.

City wall uncovered

The town of Aila was fortified, or probably refortified, by a substantial city wall with projecting towers in the 4th or 5th century AD. These fortifications might be associated with the 10th Fretensis Legion of Roman troops, which is known to have been moved to Aila in 300 AD and to have remained there from the end of the 3rd to at least the early 5th Century AD. With 1,000 troops and their families, they would have represented a substantial injection into the local economy.

The Roman-Byzantine fortification wall, which averaged 1.10 to 1.40 metres thickness and was preserved to a height of two metres, has been uncovered along a total length of over 100 metres. It was interrupted by rectangular towers that projected out some



An excavated fragment of a marble cross from a Byzantine church

four metres. The lack of internal structures in the lower portion of the tower suggests the tower was intended only as an elevated fighting platform.

The fortifications seem to have fallen into some disrepair by the Late Byzantine period (6th/early 7th centuries AD), and the city wall was extensively robbed of its stones, as the focal point of human activity shifted to the new Early Islamic urban quarter immediately to the south-east of Roman-Byzantine Aila. The earlier site continued to be inhabited, though, as shown by several domestic areas dating from the Late Byzantine, Umayyad and early Abbasid periods.

Mud brick domestic complexes typically comprised several rooms built around a paved courtyard, with artefact remains such as common ware pottery, glass and animal bones. The excavations revealed

several phases of stone walls, mud brick walls and associated floors, with evidence of domestic (tabuns) and industrial installations (clay mixing pits). One area had remains of substantial Umayyad period stone and mud brick houses laid out on both sides of a street, beneath which was a stone-lined well fed by a ceramic drainpipe from the street.

The evidence suggests to Dr. Parker that there may have been domestic and/or industrial "suburbs" outside the early Islamic city walls, some of which stood on the site of the former Roman/Byzantine town. One such area was abandoned after the 8th century and was used as a municipal dump by the new Islamic town.

In an area almost directly west of Islamic Aila, some 100 metres from the coastline, the team uncovered a late Abbasid domestic complex built on top of earlier Umayyad remains. Just over four metres below the modern ground surface they hit the water table and had to stop digging. Whether the Byzantine city extended this far south is not clear, but is likely in view of the increasing amount of Byzantine pottery that was found as the trench extended deeper into the earth. The sea level has risen some two metres worldwide since the Roman period, and thus it is likely that another full metre of occupational remains may now be lying underwater. The deep deposits clearly suggest, Dr. Parker said, that the Byzantine city continued to experience extensive occupation until late Abbasid times. No evidence of Fatimid period habitation has been found in the excavation areas (as were found inside Islamic era Aila next door).

Complex, vibrant economy

From the information obtained so far from the excavations, the Byzantine-Roman city's economy is now known to have comprised a combination of metalworking and ceramics industries, extensive trade with East Mediterranean partners, and some local agriculture and fishing. "The city had a complex, vibrant economy that flourished well into the Islamic period," Dr. Parker said, adding that the economy also benefited from holy pilgrim traffic, Roman-Byzantine military payrolls, and perhaps inflows of livestock from surrounding pastoral areas.

Industrial smelting

The excavations also uncovered evidence of metal and ceramic smelting in the Roman/Byzantine period — not surprising, given the substantial evidence for copper smelting throughout the Wadi Araba in many ancient periods. The 1994 dig had documented copper ore and slag, bronze and copper objects and some iron slag,

all of which provide clues to the ancient city's economy. Many glass fragments suggest that the city also may have supported a glass industry.

This year's work revealed several thick beds of clay that were mined in pits to feed ancient ceramics industries in the Nabataean/Early Roman period. One excavated area yielded a pithos (elongated storage jar) filled with natural clay, along with much ceramic slag and kiln wasters, suggesting the remains of an ancient local pottery industry. The find is significant because it may be the only known example of Nabataean common ware production outside of Petra (though there is also evidence of Nabataean pottery production at Udrum, east of Petra, and at Oboda/Avdat in the Naqab/Negev desert).

Nabataean fine wares at the site were imported from Petra. This area, towards the north of the Roman-Byzantine town, seems to have been abandoned after the 3rd Century AD. There is general evidence that the town's focus of occupation shifted towards the south by the 4th Century AD.

Complex, vibrant economy

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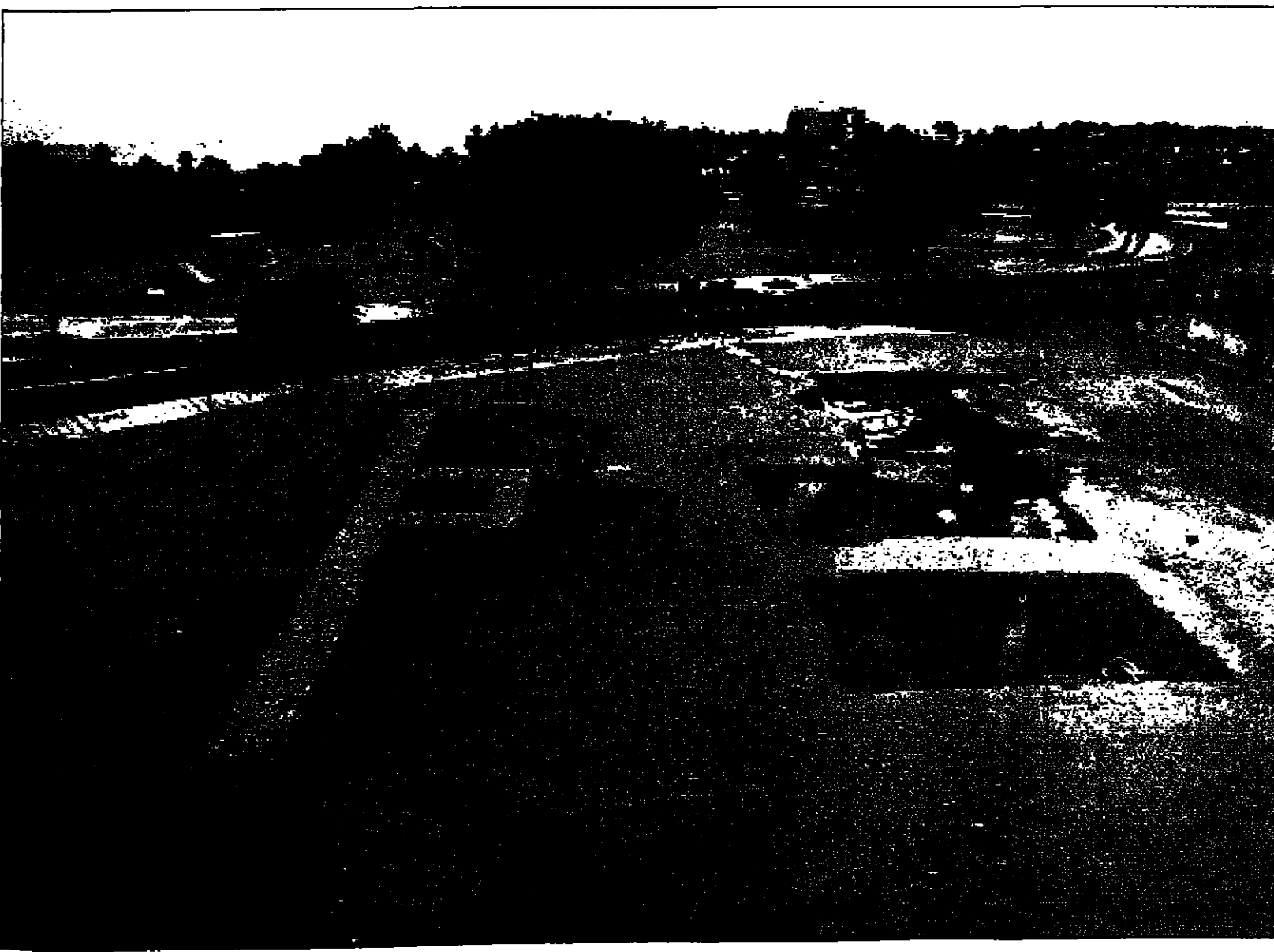
Regional trade is attested by many red wares (plates and dishes) originating from Turkey, Cyprus and Tunisia, as well as amphora (shipping/storage jars). Commodities from east and west that passed through the port-town included wine, oil, garum (fish sauce), grain, glass, marble, metal, spices, stone vessels, and luxury goods. Several of the excavated areas are privately owned,

including the apparent 4th Century basilica. Vacant lots known to contain remains of Nabataean/Roman/Byzantine Aila are possibly threatened with destruction "due to" commercial, residential or street construction projects. Dr. Parker stressed the cooperation he received from the Aqaba Region Authority (ARA), which has altered some city development masterplans in order to preserve antiquities that were discovered by the project. The ARA has also designated some plots of land with archaeological remains (including parts of the Byzantine city wall and a Byzantine cemetery) as archaeological parks that it will develop in future.

The survey evidence

The 1996 survey survey of the southern Wadi Araba recorded a total of 75 ancient sites, bringing the total identified in two survey seasons to 234 sites. Artefacts date principally from the Middle and Upper Paleolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze, Early Roman/Nabataean, Late Roman, Early/Late Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Among the striking new discoveries was a segment of a paved, three-metre-wide ancient road south of Gharrandal, running for several kilometres in a north/south direction. The survey has also located an ancient stone quarry near a small, unexcavated, late 2nd century AD Roman fort in an area north of Aqaba called Qaa' es-Sa'adiyyeh, with five inscribed milestones.

The Roman Aqaba Project has been sponsored by North Carolina State University and is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), and the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman. Funding has come from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Geographic Society, the Jukowsky Family Foundation, the Lockheed Martin Corporation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, North Carolina State University, the Kyle-Kelso Foundation, and several private donors (all from the USA), with the cooperation and support of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Aqaba Regional Authority.



A view looking south, showing a section of the 4th-5th century (early Byzantine) town wall with a tower, and, to right of photo, excavation trench with the remains of the possible early Byzantine basilica. (Photos by Jonathan Tedder)

JORDAN
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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

No decision yet on increasing price of cement — Abdul Ragheb

**** CEMENT PRICES** are still under study and evaluation by a committee representing the ministries of industry and trade, supply and finance, Industry and Trade Minister Ali Abul Ragheb has said. He pointed out that no decision has been taken on raising the prices and if any, it would reflect the actual cost for production materials and electricity. The minister explained that the committee has not yet reached a decision either to increase or lower cement prices and stressed that the "issue is still under study."

Reliable sources at the Jordan Cement Factories Company denied that there is any intention at present to raise prices of cement. The sources indicated that the subject of price increase was not on the agenda for a review by the Council of Ministers. "However that does not mean or deny that the company has submitted many requests to the government to raise the prices," the sources said noting at the same time that "what has been said recently is nothing more than rumours."

An official at the company said a decision has not been taken yet to take loans from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which, in a recent study, highly commended the company for its industrial efficiency, technical management and future opportunities in terms of internal and external markets. The official said the company borrows about JD20 million annually from local credit institutions at extremely high interest rate that reaches 14.5 per cent. "But if the IFC offers safer terms and lower interest, the company might turn to it," the official added.

Some of the calls for JD42 in the local market while the export is \$42 per tonne although the price varies to prices of competitors in the side markets. The price of cement was increased by 13 per cent five years ago and according to market dealers any increase this time would directly affect construction costs and may harm some contractors in the private sector as investors are likely to keep away from investing in housing projects.

According to a contractor, the construction market is currently in a recession and, as such, any increase in the prices of cement would only make things "unbearable" (Al Aswaj).

Airbus Industrie banks on Asia to spur 'Superjumbo' project

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Airbus Industrie is banking on Asian airlines to fuel the development of the world's largest commercial plane, analysts and officials said after Boeing Co. dropped out of the "Superjumbo" dogfight.

Singapore Airlines Ltd. expressed disappointment at Boeing's decision, saying it had a "definite need" for the plane while Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. of Hong Kong said it was still interested in aircraft in the 500- to 600-seat range.

"Demand for an aircraft of this size is being largely driven by airlines of the

Asia-Pacific region, and this could amount to some 550 aircraft in the region over the next 20 years," said Airbus regional spokesman Sean Lee.

Mr. Lee told AFP here the region was the "most important" market for the proposed 550-seat A3XX, which the European consortium wants to launch next year and put in service by 2003 at a development cost of \$8 billion.

"The interest we have been having from the airlines we have been talking to is very encouraging and for that reason we are proceeding with confidence in

our studies as planned," he said.

"If Boeing has scrapped its plans, it means that Airbus will be alone in this market," Mr. Lee added.

Airbus' U.S. rival Boeing said recently that "sufficient market demand has not yet developed to justify committing the significant investment required" to continued development of a 747 accommodating 550 passengers.

Airbus Industrie forecasts a market for 1,380 aircraft of 500 seats and above, worth some \$300 billion, in the years to 2014.

Of these, more than one-third would be delivered to Asia-Pacific airlines, with the aircraft flying primarily on routes linking Asia with Europe, trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic services and high-density domestic and regional services.

Singapore Airlines (SIA), one of the world's most profitable airlines, has urged manufacturers to speed up the development of a Superjumbo to enable carriers to cope with growing air and airport congestion.

It said it could buy six of

them.

"We are naturally disappointed with Boeing's decision to shelve plans to build the larger-capacity versions of the B747 Jumbo jets," said Karmjit Singh, the airline's corporate affairs assistant director.

"SIA has a definite need for some of the Superjumbos particularly at congested, slot-constrained international gateways," he said.

He said he hoped that Boeing would reconsider its decision. "Otherwise, Airbus Industrie may fill the vacuum."

In Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific spokesman Kwan Chuk-Fai said the airline was still interested in buying a Superjumbo but would be very cautious about the cost.

"We haven't made up our minds whether to order any. We have indicated our interest to both constructors, but there's no plan yet (to buy). You are talking about huge investments here, so the economics have to be right, the numbers have to be right, first," Mr. Kwan added.

The Airbus A3XX would

be priced at about \$198 million.

Malaysia Airlines System BHD. Chairman Tajudin Ramli said in September that airline was considering buying Superjumbo aircraft as part of its plan to phase out smaller aircraft.

"The minimum order for each launch customer is six, so that will probably be the number of orders we will place," he said.

Philippine Airlines official Jaime Bautista said in Manila the Superjumbo was "too big for our needs" while Air India spokesman J. Bhargava said in Bombay that medium-capacity, long-range aircraft are "good enough for us."

Taiwan Airlines had no plans to buy any Superjumbos, officials said in Taipei, while a spokesman for Australian carrier Qantas said in Sydney it had made no plans to buy Boeing's Superjumbo.

A spokesman for Japan Airlines Co. Ltd. said it was one of the carriers talking to Boeing "about this airplane, but we didn't get as far as making any option or placing any orders."

"In future, there may well

be need for a bigger aircraft, but the situation is very fluid," he said.

Korean Air spokesman Seo Kang-Yoon commented in Seoul that the "world-wide market has not yet ripened for huge airliners such as Superjumbo jets."

Analysts in Singapore said, however, that future demand for a large-capacity plane on long-haul, non-stop routes could not be ruled out amid moves towards relaxed restrictions on aviation services.

"I am sure that Boeing did a feasibility study, but what I am hearing from airlines is that there is potential for a very long-haul aircraft that could do Hong Kong-New York, Singapore-New York, for instance," an aviation analyst said.

"At the moment the U.S. is holding talks with Singapore and could also hold talks with Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea and New Zealand on open skies," he added.

"That is something which in the long run, if it is approved, could strongly stimulate traffic on the trans-Pacific."

Bank deposits soar in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — The total deposits of Lebanon's 80 commercial banks soared by nearly 30 per cent last year, the governor of the central bank said Sunday.

Total deposits of Lebanon, Arab, European and American banks operating in the country rose by 28.5 per cent in 1996 over the previous year to \$19.7 billion. Central Bank of Lebanon chief Riad Salame told AFP.

Mr. Salame said bank deposits have doubled over the past three years and were an important indicator of renewed confidence in the Lebanese economy, devastated by the 1975-1990 civil war.

Lebanon's banks have played a significant role in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country once considered the banking capital of the Middle East.

Mr. Salame said the country's banks doled out loans totalling \$8.1 billion to the private sector last year, up from \$6.5 billion in 1995.

Meanwhile, Banque du Liban et d'Outre Mer (BLOM) became the second Beirut bank to announce a big year-end capital increase and bankers said the trend would put pressure on a host of smaller banks to increase capital or merge.

BLOM followed Banque de la Mediterranee of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri in reporting that it had doubled capital at the end of 1996.

It said shareholders' equity had been increased from \$77 million to over \$150 million. This put it in second place behind Mediterranean whose chairman Mustafa Razian said it had increased capital from \$102 million to \$220 million.

Mediterranee ranked as Lebanon's top bank in 1995 by most criteria except for customer deposits in which BLOM was biggest. Both had total assets of around \$1.9 billion at end 1995.

BLOM also said in a statement announcing the capital increase that it had acquired all shares in Paris-based Banque Banorabe-France which has branches in London, Dubai, Sharjah and Muscat and wholly owns Geneva-based Banque Banorient-Suisse.

This made BLOM "the Lebanese bank with the largest presence in major European and Arab financial centres," it said.

The capital increases set Mediterranean and BLOM apart as the giants of Lebanon's crowded banking sector, with Banque Audi trailing in third place with \$63 million capital. Only six other banks have shareholders' equity of more than \$20 million.

The big two have increased capital sharply following Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war. Since 1993 BLOM's capital has jumped from \$19 million to \$150 million and Mediterranean from \$15 million to \$212 million. Mediterranean's Razian says his target is \$500 million by the year 2,000.


BLOM did not immediately say how it carried out its latest capital increase, but Mr. Razian said Mediterranean's came from 1996 profits of about \$20 million and in cash from its shareholder, Mr. Hariri.

The approach of the big two appeared to differ from other dynamic banks like Audi, Byblos Bank and Banque Libanaise pour le Commerce which in the past 17 months have raised capital through public or private share issues on the local and international markets.

A dealer with another Beirut bank said the BLOM and Mediterranean increases the gap between Lebanon's bigger banks and the host of smaller, family-owned institutions, many of which had capital of only \$2-\$3 million.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARJAH										
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 26/01/1997										
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
261.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.0	1.37	7	200	51200	256.25	256.00	-25-
5.800	4.250	ALIBO INSHURANCE	10.3	1.00	1	200	15000	5.10	5.00	-10-
1.210	.880	MID-EAST INV. BK.	76.2	0.00	7	2400	21600	1.16	1.16	-
2.450	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.5	2.95	2	110	916	4.71	4.60	-11-
10.400	8.720	JOR. REALTY BANK	19.3	0.00	4	216	656	2.69	2.67	-2-
1.090	.580	JOR. GULF BANK	5.7	7.29	2	500	478	.95	.96	+1-
4.180	3.480	J.R. ISLAMIC BANK	18.3	0.00	23	5535	21030	3.78	3.81	+3-
1.450	1.000	F. LAZARUS INV. BK.	9	0.00	6	2328	3091	1.30	1.30	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
1.740	1.290	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	12.1	4.55	1	750	12138	1.74	1.65	-9-
2.800	2.300	GENERAL ARAB INSUR.	73.2	0.00	2	128	294	2.30	2.30	-
4.550	4.000	JERUSALEM INSUR.	11.5	4.71	1	100	425	4.25	4.25	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
1.830	1.450	J.W. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.3	7.36	9	4776	7785	1.63	1.63	-
5.800	4.250	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	18.2	2.79	8	60250	271343	4.50	4.40	-10-
1.620	1.080	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1050	1260	1.20	1.20	-
1.050	.820	RAL ESTATE INV.	15.3	0.00	2	376	326	.88	.87	-1-
2.200	1.490	N.D. EAST HOTELS	65.5	0.00	1	250	380	1.53	1.52	-1-
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	13.9	5.68	2	350	1232	3.55	3.52	-3-
1.220	.960	UNION EDUCATION	9	0.00	6	1540	1616	1.05	1.05	-
1.200	.820	ARAB LAND DEV.	9	0.00	4	11000	9335	.85	.85	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
5.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.4	2.94	32	4396	14858	3.35	3.40	+5-
3.500	2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	36.6	0.00	11	45517	154756	3.40	3.40	-
5.800	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.9	3.39	6	797	14698	5.86	5.80	-8-
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. RESERVARY	10.1	7.99	19	3240	32396	9.95	10.01	+6-
3.560	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COM. AG.	34.3	0.00	11	3630	9273	2.60	2.55	-5-
4.580	3.040	ARAB PHARM. IND.	20.0	5.48	3	150	2365	3.64	3.68	+1*
7.380	4.250	DAP ALUMINA IND. TRD.	15.9	4.26	7	1400	6933	4.80	4.70	-10-
.960	.450	L. ESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	8	9500	5800	.62	.62	-
1.440	1.060	ARAB PAPER COM. TRD.	8.1	8.70	1	200	238	1.21	1.19	-2-
1.020	.540	NATIONAL INDUS.	9.2	8.56	11	3850	2580	.67	.67	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
1.800	.500	JOR. TRADE PAC.	14.4	0.00	5	2250	1200	.54	.54	-
.890	.700	UNION INV. 501	68.9	0.00	1	2000	440	.72	.72	-
.980	.370	ARAB FISH. INVEST.	9	0.00	2	2000	900	.45	.45	-
.640	.300	J.C. IND. MATCH-JEHO	9	0.00	7	7500	2250	.30	.30	-
.800	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	1	200	124	.62	.62	-
1.690	1.300	NATL. CHOCOLATE	9	0.00	2	1700	3239	1.38	1.27	-11-
.450	.680	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	1	1000	480	.48	.48	-
.860	.520	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	4300	2317	.84	.84	-
.820	.400	NATL. MULT. ENG. HAMICO	9	0.00	10	18750	9188	.50	.49	-11-
.740	.430	WYSEAR DYES & MOUTDS	14	0.00	14	22000	12105	.54	.56	+2-
.960	.720	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	3	2050	1558	.76	.76	-
.780	.620	MID-EAST PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	1	750	285	.64	.63	-11-
.760	.760	INDUS. ENG.	27.7	0.00	20	35100	15795	.45	.45	-
1.260	.760	INDUS. CERAMIC	9	0.00	3	2150	1732	.82	.80	-2-
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	5	3250	2465	.75	.77	+2*
.950	.530	MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	11	8000	5263	.66	.66	-
RAND TOTAL										
154.03	117.10	INDEX	154.03	117.10	138	98378	273218			
GRAND TOTAL										
154.03	117.10	INDEX	154.03	117.10	230	190563	655394			
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 26/01/1997										
.800	.500	JOR. TRADE PAC.	14.4	0.00	5	2250	1200	.54	.54	-
.890	.700	UNION INV. 501	68.9	0.00	1	2000	440	.72	.72	-
.980	.370	ARAB FISH. INVEST.	9	0.00	2	2000	900	.45	.45	-
.640	.300	J.C. IND. MATCH-JEHO	9	0.00	7	7500	2250	.30	.30	-
.800	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	1	200	124	.62	.62	-
1.690	1.300	NATL. CHOCOLATE	9	0.00	2	1700	3239	1.38	1.27	-11-
.450	.680	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	1	1000	480	.48	.48	-
.860	.520	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	4300	2317	.84	.84	-
.820	.400	NATL. MULT. ENG. HAMICO	9	0.00	10	18750	9188	.50	.49	-11-
.740	.430	WYSEAR DYES & MOUTDS	14	0.00	14	22000	12105	.54	.56	+2-
.960	.720	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	3	2050	1558	.76	.76	-
.780	.620	MID-EAST PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	1	750	285	.64	.63	-11-
.760	.760	INDUS. ENG.	27.7	0.00	20	35100	15795	.45	.45	-
1.260	.760	INDUS. CERAMIC	9	0.00	3	2150	1732	.82	.80	-2-
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	5	3250	2465	.75	.77	+2*
.950	.530	MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	11	8000	5263	.66	.66	-
RAND TOTAL										
154.03	117.10	INDEX	154.03	117.10	138	98378	273218			

† : New 12 months low
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more
- : Negative P/E
E : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year



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4. Computer literate, (the accounting

Waddle sees off Everton

LONDON (AFP) — Former England star Chris Waddle scored one of the goals of his career on Saturday as he inspired First Division strugglers Bradford City to a stunning 3-2 win over 1995 FA Cup winners Everton in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

The 36-year-old former Newcastle and Olympique Marseille star, capped 62 times by England, set up the other two goals as Bradford, currently 22nd in the First Division, inflicted Everton's sixth successive defeat.

Bradford were not the only giantkillers as Second Division Wrexham were celebrating after dumping Premiership side West Ham out of the FA Cup in their delayed third round replay with a dramatic last-minute winner.

The modest Welsh side who knocked out Arsenal in 1992, sparked wild celebrations among their 3,000 travelling fans when substitute Kevin Russell, a 10-club journeyman, struck from 20 yards.

Hundreds of angry West Ham fans invaded the pitch at the final whistle to shout angry abuse at the directors' box before moving to the far end of the pitch and applauding their rivals from North Wales.

Non-league Woking were also uncorking the champagne in the communal bath after earning a replay with Premiership side and 1987 winners Coventry with a 1-1 draw at Highfield Road.

And crisis club Middlesbrough narrowly escaped one of the biggest upsets in the history of the Cup with late goals from Fabrizio Ravanelli and Jan-Age Fjortoft sealing a 3-



Manchester United soccer star Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (L) of Norway is tackled by Wimbledon's captain Vinnie Jones. Manchester drew 1-1 with Wimbledon in the FA Cup game at Old Trafford (Reuters photo)

2 comeback win against part-timers Hedsnesford.

Waddle was in jubilant mood after his stunning 35 yard chip helped Bradford, appearing in the fourth round for the first time since 1989, to the win over Everton.

He said: "I have never been a giant-killer before — it's a nice feeling. I've scored some great goals in my career but that is up there with the best of them."

Coventry boss Gordon Strachan made no attempt to hide his disgust at his side's performance after RAF serviceman Steve Thompson set up a replay with a last-minute strike for part-timers Woking.

Strachan said: "I have tried to defend my players, sometimes blindly. But I've no defence today."

Middlesbrough boss Bryan Robson admitted he was "relieved to say the least" after his side avoided a replay with the amateurs of Hedsnesford, who were assembled at a cost of just 20,000 pounds — less than half the weekly wage of Boro striker Ravanelli.

Manchester United, whose last defeat in the FA Cup was at the hands of Everton in the 1995 final, boss Alex Ferguson paid tribute to Wimbledon's fighting spirit after a goal in the dying seconds by Robbie Earle cancelled out Paul Scholes' effort a minute earlier and set up a fourth round replay at Selhurst Park.

Elsewhere, Aston Villa, whose Premiership challenge has collapsed in recent weeks, were dumped out of the Cup by Midlands rivals, Derby, 3-1.

Sheffield Wednesday eased through with a 2-0 win over Second Division Carlisle in the fourth round while Rod Wallace's fine

42nd-minute strike gave Leeds side a 1-0 third round replay win over First Division Crystal Palace and secured manager George Graham an Arsenal reunion in the next round.

QPR scored a 3-1 win over First Division rivals Barnsley.

Elsewhere, a goal by Kevin Francis against his former club set Birmingham City on the way to a 3-1 win over Second Division Stockport, their first loss in 12 cup ties this season, while Nicky Summerbee's 62nd minute goal gave Manchester City a 1-0 victory at Brentford.

Leicester clinched a 2-1 win over Norwich, giving their boss Martin O'Neill double cause for celebration as he saw off his old team and kept alive the possibility of two trips to Wembley after Leicester reached the League Cup semi-finals earlier in the week.

Portsmouth beat Reading 3-0.

Few mourn absence of Cowboys and 49ers

NEW ORLEANS (AFP) — Nobody here for the 31st Super Bowl is mourning the absence of the Dallas Cowboys or San Francisco 49ers.

In fact, one of the reasons for celebration is that after one of the two reached the National Football League title game six of the past eight years, two seldom-seen teams in Green Bay and New England are matched this year.

"People want to see different teams in the Super Bowl," Packer defender Reggie White said. "It's possible we could go for a while, or New England, and people would get tired of that. So it is a changing of the guard."

Seven months after pre-season workouts began, play culminates after a season of new powers topping traditional heavyweights.

Dallas, Pittsburgh, Denver and the 49ers were all ousted in the playoff quarter-finals.

"To everybody who wanted so badly for all those other teams to be in the Super Bowl — hey, they didn't make it," Packer defender Sean Jones said. "We're the best. That's how it is."

Green Bay went 13-3 in the regular season, sharing best-record honours with Denver. In addition, many figured Dallas would be improved after top receiver Michael Irvin returned from a five-game suspension.

"Two other teams were supposed to be here — Dallas and Denver," Jones said. "It doesn't make any difference what we do. We don't belong here as far as a lot of people are concerned."

Carl Lewis to retire in June

SYDNEY (AFP) — U.S. Olympic track legend Carl Lewis is to retire this summer.

"I intend to make my final race at Houston in June," said the 35-year-old here on Sunday. "This will be my last season."

"Physically, I could continue for another three to four years but the mental pressure is harder."

"I don't know what it's going to feel like not being on the track any more but I'm not going to sever my connection with the sport or with the Olympics," added Lewis, here for Monday's Sydney Athletics Grand Prix meeting.

Lewis, one of the greatest athletics ever, has made every United States Olympic team since 1980 and was voted track and field athlete of the decade in the 1980s.

"I have had to adjust to people coming to see Carl the legend over the years but

everyone realises you're not going to win every race," he said.

Lewis said that after his farewell tour he planned to continue his involvement in charity work with handicapped children.

As well as his nine Olympic titles, Lewis has won eight world championship gold medals, set seven world records and recorded 65 straight victories in the long jump between 1981 and 1991.

"This tour is giving me an opportunity to run in places where I've not competed before, starting with New Zealand and Australia, where fans can see me and I can get a better look at some of these countries," he said.

Lewis will face a strong Australian field of sprinters on Monday including internationals Dean Capobianco, Steve Brimacombe and newcomer Patrick Johnson.

Jazz beat Houston in OT

HOUSTON (R) — Karl Malone scored 27 points, John Stockton added 26 and the Utah Jazz used a 7-0 run in overtime to claim a 105-100 road victory over the first-place Houston Rockets Saturday in one of the NBA's best rivalries.

Bryon Russell had 16 points for the Jazz, who won for the sixth time in seven games and climbed within 2 1/2 games of the Rockets for the top spot in the Midwest Division.

"They are a better team than we are in several ways, but we don't give up in what we do," Jazz coach Jerry Sloan said. "We executed and played great defence and got some clutch shots. Russell was outstanding."

Hakeem Olajuwon scored a season-high 41 points and grabbed 15 rebounds and Clyde Drexler had 21 for Houston, which was outscored in the extra period, 14-9.

Houston's Charles Barkley, who missed the last four games with a sprained ankle, came within two assists of a triple double. He had 10 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists.

"Utah is one of the few teams that can challenge us,"

Barkley said. "They are physical, they have experience and they play smart. All three of those added up to a win tonight."

Stockton had 11 assists and a career-high six steals for the Jazz, who hit 47 percent of their three-point attempts. Russell led the way from long range, going 4-for-7.

"This rivalry is one of mutual respect," Stockton said. "Every time we play these guys, it comes down to the last few seconds."

In Atlanta, Mookie Blaylock scored 24 points and Steve Smith added 18 as the Hawks held off the Boston Celtics 95-90 for their 19th straight home victory.

The Hawks won for the 12th time in 13 games overall.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 24 points as the Bulls built a 23-point lead and cruised to their 14th straight home win, 110-98 over the Toronto Raptors.

Toni Kukoc added 18 points and a career-high 13 rebounds for the Bulls, who improved to a league-best 21-1 at home with their 12th win in 13 games overall.

Chicago avenged losses in its last two meetings with Toronto.

In Cleveland, Terrell Brandon scored 21 points and Donny Marshall had a career-high 17 as the Cavaliers snapped a four-game home losing streak, 106-73 over the Charlotte Hornets.

In Detroit, Grant Hill recorded his 14th career triple-double and third of the season with 21 points, a season-high 16 rebounds and 10 assists as the Pistons beat the Philadelphia 76ers for the 10th straight time, 104-95.

The Pistons posted their 30th win in their 41st game. Detroit reached 30 wins in its 43rd game in 1988-89 and 1989-90 en route to consecutive NBA titles.

At Washington, Rod Strickland scored eight of his 21 points in a decisive fourth-quarter run as the Bullets snapped a three-game losing streak, 113-105 over the Sacramento Kings.

In Vancouver, Laphonso Ellis scored off his own miss with 2.6 seconds remaining, giving the Denver Nuggets an 83-82 victory and spoiling Stu Jackson's debut as Grizzlies coach.

In Portland, Isaiah Rider scored 22 points as the Trail Blazers continued their dominance of the Minnesota Timberwolves, 101-94. Portland leads the series, 28-3.

In Dallas, Jamal Mashburn scored 21 points and Jim Jackson added 20 as the Mavericks stopped a three-game losing streak with a 92-81 victory over the New Jersey Nets.

At Indiana, Elliot Perry scored a season-high 19 points, including an 11-foot fallaway jumper at the buzzer that lifted the Milwaukee Bucks to an 88-86 victory over the Pacers.

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Likud, Labour sign paper on Palestinian final status

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Deputies from Israel's main governing and opposition parties signed a joint document Sunday laying out what they believe should be Israel's objectives in negotiations on a final status for the Palestinian territories.

The document, which is not binding on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was signed by eight deputies, led by Michael Eitan of the ruling Likud bloc and opposition Labour Deputy Yossi Beilin, one of the main architects of the Oslo peace accords.

Mr. Beilin, who is running to succeed Shimon Peres as Labour Party leader, and Mr. Eitan presented their proposals Sunday to Mr. Netanyahu and President Ezer Weizman.

The position paper, drawn up in four months of discussions, recommends a permanent peace settlement which would involve Israeli annexation of most Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including much of the Jordan Valley, in exchange for granting broad self-rule to the rest of the Palestinian area.

The document did not reach agreement on the nature of the new Palestinian entity or its borders. Labour deputies argued for granting Palestinians independence within a broad autonomy short of full sovereignty.

Negotiations on the final status of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem began symbolically in May last year as called for under the 1995 Oslo interim peace agreement, but they have since been on hold.

As part of a Jan. 15 agreement on Israel's withdrawal from most of the West Bank city of Hebron, both sides agreed to resume the final status talks by late March. The negotiations are to be concluded by May 1999.

The negotiations are due

U.S. 'will accept any decision' reached by parties concerned

AS ISRAEL and the Palestinians traded recriminations over the question of Palestinian statehood, the U.S. consul general for Jerusalem said the United States would accept any decision the two sides reached.

In a front-page interview published Sunday in the Palestinian newspaper Al Ayyam, Edward G. Abington said it was not up to the United States to decide whether there would be a Palestinian state.

"It is an issue the Israelis and Palestinians will work together on," he said. "It's an issue both sides are directly interested in."

Addressing a crowd of high school students in Hebron on Saturday, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat drew applause when he said, "my loved ones, you are the future. You are the ones who will build this state — centimetre by centimetre — side by side — to build the state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. And whoever does not like it can go and drink the Dead Sea."

"We believe the two sides will reach an understanding," Mr. Abington said. "Arafat clearly announced that he wants an independent Palestinian state and that is what the majority of the Palestinians want," Mr. Abington said. "You hear different opinions from the Israelis because it is a sensitive issue. The United States will accept any decision reached by the two sides."

to resolve such thorny issues as the final borders and powers of the Palestinian entity, the fate of Jewish settlements, future of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees.

Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said meanwhile if the Palestinians unilaterally declared an independent state Israel should immediately annex the land such a state would claim as its own.

"If (the Palestinians) declare a Palestinian state, Israel (should) immediately annex all these areas," Mr. Sharon said in broadcast remarks.

Mr. Sharon, staunch supporter of Jewish settlement of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, parts of which are now under Palestinian rule, has been sidelined by Mr. Netanyahu during recent negotiations with the Palestinians.

But Mr. Netanyahu, in reaction to Palestinian

President Yasser Arafat's recent declarations he will eventually unilaterally declare an independent state, has also warned he would take severe action against the move which he says would violate peace deals.

Mr. Netanyahu has not elaborated on what the action would be other than to say he has a plan "in the drawer".

Since Israel's handover of 80 per cent of Hebron to Palestinian rule more than a week ago, Mr. Arafat, in defiance of Israel, has stepped up statements that he will declare a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian National Authority, which is based in Gaza, now controls most of the Gaza Strip and eight West Bank towns handed over by Israel under several agreements signed since 1993. Israel retains control of parts of the West Bank and Gaza known as Area C which includes Jewish settlements and military bases.

Orthodox Jews berate American reform rabbis

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Ultra-Orthodox Jews shouted insults Sunday at visiting U.S. reform Jews who prayed at the Western Wall with men and women standing together in violation of orthodox Jewish custom.

"You women are impure and evil spirits," shouted one ultra-orthodox Jew after the men and women reform rabbis prayed in the plaza about 50 metres from the wall.

Orthodox men at the scene shouted that women could not be rabbis. "You have no brains," objected one man. "You are disgusting," shouted three young ultra-orthodox seminary students, who wore black coats and trilby hats.

Border police quickly escorted the orthodox students away from the women rabbis. One of the students began screaming and lay face down on the ground until he was carried off by his friends.

In accordance with orthodox tradition, women are permitted to pray at the wall but are separated from the men by a barrier.

The reform women, in contradiction of orthodox practice, wore prayer shawls, phylacteries on their right arm

and forehead, and skull caps. "These people desecrate God's holy name," said Isaac, an ultra-orthodox Jew from Spring Valley, New York, who refused to give his full name. "They violate the laws of the Torah here at Judaism's holiest site, and they cause such pain to devout Jews that they sometimes even drive them to violence."

Reform delegation leader, Rabbi Ami Hirsch, 38, of New York said: "We are holding this egalitarian service to demonstrate for religious pluralism, for the right of all Jews to practice their religion according to their lights."

He said the group planned to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and warn him against giving in to pressure from the ultra-orthodox to pass legislation which would disqualify conversions to Judaism conducted by conservative and reform rabbis outside Israel.

Orthodox rabbis currently control all conversions in Israel but non-orthodox conversions abroad are recognised by the state.



An ultra-orthodox Jew lies on the ground as others look on, at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem on Sunday, in protest after some 50 Reform Jews, men and women, held prayers together at the site against the tradition of segregation in prayers (AFP photo)

Hamas assails Arafat nomination

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Islamic Resistance movement (Hamas) on Sunday criticised a decision by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to appoint a Muslim fundamentalist to his cabinet as a political ploy.

"In a new ploy to improve his deteriorating position and cover up his political defeats ... Arafat decided to name Sheikh Talal Sadr to his cabinet," Hamas said in a statement received in Cairo.

"Sheikh Sadr's participation will not be able to hide for long Arafat's dictatorship," Hamas said.

Sheikh Sadr's who leads a local Muslim association in the West Bank, was expelled to Lebanon by Israel in 1992 for his activities with Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against the Jewish state.

Hamas accused Mr. Arafat of seeking to "obtain the support of Islamic groups for his policy of surrender" through the appointment of Sheikh Sadr.

It also voiced surprise at Sheikh Sadr's acceptance of the post of minister of youth and sports "at a time when the Palestinian (National) Authority still holds dozens of members of the Islamic movement."

Sheikh Sadr took the oath of office before the Palestinian cabinet during its weekly meeting on Friday.

Israelis fire tear-gas

Israeli soldiers fired tear-gas on Sunday at several hundred Palestinian villagers protesting the uprooting of 500 olive trees.

Dozens of villagers were treated for tear-gas inhalation.

According to Palestinian witnesses, the soldiers fired in the air and then used tear-gas to disperse the demonstrators in the West Bank town of Toura, 20 kilometres west of Jenin.

Israel says the land is "state" land and the growers are trespassing.

No arrests were made and no serious injuries were reported.

Russia, in apparent bid to shore up role, invites Netanyahu and Arafat

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In an attempt to reassert its weight as a co-sponsor of the Mideast peace process, Russia has invited Middle East leaders to hold talks in Moscow, news agencies reported.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister for Middle East Affairs Viktor Posvalyuk was quoted by Radio Israel as informing Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy of the invitations forwarded by the Russian government.

According to Petra, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa were invited to Moscow by the Russian government.

Demonstrating the second world power's determination to play a greater role in the Arab-Israeli peace process, Mr. Posvalyuk described the projected Moscow meeting as "a tool to reactivate the peace process on all tracks" and

proof of his country's "readiness to continue the multilateral phase of peace negotiations." Petra reported.

International news agencies said that, before reaching Israel, Mr. Posvalyuk held a Saturday meeting in Amman with Russian ambassadors to different countries of the region to discuss Russia's role in the Mideast peace process.

The Russian embassy in Amman confirmed that the meeting took place but declined to issue any statement and refused to disclose any information regarding either participants or issues tackled in the meeting.

A joint statement issued Thursday by three Jordanian leftist parties saluted Moscow's initiative and called for an increased role for the Russian government in the multilateral phase of the peace process.

The Jordanian People's Democratic Party (Hashd), the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party and the National Labour Party declared in the statement their "great hope that (Russia) will resume its role as a sponsor of a just and

equal peace."

After Jordan and Israel, Mr. Posvalyuk is scheduled to visit Syria, the Interfax news agency reported Sunday.

Interfax quoted Mr. Posvalyuk, upon his departure for his Middle East tour, as saying that he was pleased by the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreement on Hebron but was concerned with the "evident stagnation" in Israel's talks with Lebanon and Syria.

Reiterating his government's determination to achieve a "comprehensive peace," Mr. Posvalyuk stated that "there must be more parallel movement in the Palestinian and Syrian-Lebanese tracks because progress in one direction and stagnation in the other causes a negative reaction."

Though the exact date of the proposed Moscow summit is not yet known, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesman Vladimir Andreyev was quoted by international news agencies on Friday as saying that the meeting could take place "within the next month or two."

Arafat fires French advisor to Palestinian pension fund

PARIS (R) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has barred a French economic adviser, Gabriel Banon, from handling a Palestinian pension fund, according to documents obtained by Reuters.

In a Dec. 21 letter, Mr. Arafat told the New York bank which holds part of the pension fund that Mr. Banon and his consultancy firm no longer represented the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and instructed the bank to stop dealing with him.

"Mr. Gabriel Banon and/or Strategic and Development Policies Advisor (SDPA) do no longer represent the Palestinian National Authority in its dealing with your firm," Mr. Arafat wrote to Morgan Stanley Asset Management, confirming a Nov. 4 letter from Palestinian Justice Minister Fathi Abu Meddein.

Mr. Arafat's office confirmed the authenticity of the letter which named an Israeli-Swiss businessman, Arie Gilon, chairman of Zurich-based Belestia Asset Management, as Mr. Banon's successor. Mr. Gilon confirmed to Reuters that he had been appointed on Nov. 24.

Senior Palestinian officials said Mr. Arafat had picked Jewish businessmen with Israeli ties because he believed they would have a better chance of persuading Israel to hand over the money deducted from Palestinian

employees of the administration during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967.

Last July, Mr. Arafat paid \$250,000 out of the fund to an account controlled by the Moroccan-born businessman at Banque Monod in Paris.

Mr. Banon, who still describes himself as Mr. Arafat's officially appointed economic adviser, told Reuters the money was transferred to cover his expenses.

He said he had originally sought \$450,000 but had told Mr. Arafat last month he would waive the remaining \$200,000 in the light of the problems it had caused for him.

"If you divide \$250,000 by the 36 months I worked on the pension fund, it comes to less than \$7,000 a month. That doesn't even pay my office rent," Mr. Banon said.

He said he had advised Mr. Arafat to transfer the entire pension fund to the Paris bank to avoid U.S. taxation, since at that time the United States would not grant the PNA an exemption it gives to sovereign states.

Mr. Abu Meddein, who is chairman of the pension fund, travelled to Paris in September and halted that transfer.

After weeks of argument, he convinced Mr. Arafat to remove Mr. Banon from dealing with the fund.

"We decided to put him aside because his ideas did not coincide with our ideas," Mr. Abu Meddein told Reuters in Gaza. "The \$250,000 he received were his fees."

Another businessman with ties to Mr. Arafat, Pierre Rizk, former intelligence chief of the Lebanese Forces militia, has since sued Mr. Banon in a Paris court for a cut of the proceeds from the pension fund.

In an interview with Reuters, Mr. Banon said: "My mission on the pension fund is drawing to an end. Other missions are continuing." He displayed a file of letters of mission signed by Mr. Arafat in 1994 and 1995.

The Palestinian leader first took on Mr. Banon, a French citizen with U.S. residence, in December 1993, shortly after the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a peace agreement with Israel negotiated in Oslo.

Mr. Arafat did not respond to repeated requests from Reuters for comment on Mr. Banon's role, although his office confirmed he had signed the letter barring Mr. Banon from the pension fund.

PLO officials said Mr. Arafat's original aim had been to attract foreign investment through an intermediary he believed enjoyed the confidence both of the Israelis and the international business community.

China solves mystery of dwarf village

BEIJING (R) — Residents of a village of dwarfs in central China can put an end to a life of looking up at the world, Scientists have figured out why Huilong village in central Sichuan province has produced so many dwarfs, a discovery that will allow their children to walk tall.

Xinhua news agency said. Excessive mercury levels in the drinking water was identified as the reason why about 60 villagers are dwarfs, it said. Ten of them are less than one metre tall. No new cases of dwarfism have been reported since the village was assured a supply of pollution-free drinking water, it said without saying when the clean water was provided.

Spanish villagers hurl goat from tower at fiesta

MANGANESES DE LA POLVOROSA, Spain (R) — Residents of a northern Spanish village defied protests from animal rights activists and hurled a goat from the top of a church tower in an annual ritual to honour their patron saint. Amid cheers and heckling, young villagers paraded the goat through the streets before taking it to the church and throwing it out of the belfry as part of the "jump of the goat" fiesta. Hundreds of people, many in fancy dress, were in the central square to take part in the revelry and witness the ritual. The goat survived the fall, caught in a canvas sheet held open by villagers below. But animal rights activists were still horrified at the ritual in the remote village of 1,000 people. The ritual was banned in 1992 by the governor of Zamora province, but villagers reacted so violently when police tried to stop it that the authorities were forced to rethink the ban.

Bird plunges Senegal into darkness

DAKAR (R) — A sparrow hawk plunged Senegal into darkness for four hours after short-circuiting the national electricity grid, officials said. The incident began after dusk when the bird collided with one high tension power line causing it to short against another. "This resulted in an abrupt short circuit causing a total blackout throughout the country," Adiouma Dione, a senior official of the state power company Senelec, told Reuters. He said the incident occurred at the Cap de Biches power plant that produces about 80 per cent of Senegal's electricity. A protective mechanism automatically shut down the other two power stations at Saint Louis and Kosalack, he said. The sparrow hawk perished.

Hundreds trapped on Canadian ice floe

TORONTO (R) — Shifting ice trapped at least 500 fishermen and snowmobilers on a lake about 70 kilometres north of Toronto, but no injuries were immediately reported. The Canadian forces and three police forces sent in helicopters, boats and emergency crews to rescue them. An 11-kilometre-long crack about 30 metres wide stranded the people on Lake Simcoe along with their fishing huts and vehicles, police said. The crack broke during a fishing derby, isolating at least 500 people at one end of the lake. "Every rescue service around is involved," said one officer.

French company offers two-wheel taxis

PARIS (R) — A Paris taxi company is taking harried business people on motorcycles to beat the French capital's rush-hour traffic jams. "There is no other way of being sure of getting to an appointment on time," Jean-Christophe Salou, head of the SP2 taxi company, told TPI television. The motorcycle drivers carry extra leather jackets and helmets for customers to wear over business suits.

France sells medicine

French companies are selling medicines to the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved several French medicines for sale in the U.S. The FDA has also approved several French medicines for sale in the U.S. The FDA has also approved several French medicines for sale in the U.S.

Volume 22 Number 6440

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